



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



TUESDAY — 5 JUL 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	07/05 Violent protests by kids' rock Chile
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/high-school-fire-violent-protests-by-kids-rock-chile-2022-07-05/
GIST	<p>SANTIAGO, July 5 (Reuters) - As Chilean school kids start winter vacation, they leave behind a semester marked by violence. Several high schools around Santiago were taken over by students; one was set on fire while hooded youths clashed with police and burned city buses.</p> <p>In June, the prestigious Internado Nacional Barros Arana (INBA) high school in Santiago was temporarily shut over "severe" violence, including the principal's office being set ablaze.</p> <p>In a country that has seen rapid but uneven development in recent decades, angry protests by students over expensive and poor-quality school and university education have become more frequent.</p> <p>For youngsters, that is now exacerbated, experts say, by pandemic-related behavior issues. Although some signs of negative long-term effects of coronavirus lockdowns on children have been seen elsewhere, Chile seems to be particularly hard hit.</p> <p>"We haven't seen anything elsewhere as drastic or dramatic as here," said Francisca Morales, UNICEF's Chile education officer.</p> <p>The main impact had been on teens and preteens returning to school after going through puberty in isolation, she said.</p> <p>Chile's Education Superintendent reported a 56% jump in violent incidents in the last semester compared to 2018 and 2019 before the pandemic, a surge that has troubled politicians, psychologists and teachers.</p> <p>"After these two years they chafe more with authority and discipline. There's a rejection of authority figures," said Esteban Abarca, a high school teacher at the INBA school in Santiago.</p> <p>"It's not comfortable for anyone to be in class when they're burning things or attacking the principal."</p> <p>Chilean students' history of protest goes back to mobilizations against the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in the 1970s and 1980s. Students - including current President Gabriel Boric - led demonstrations to demand education reforms in 2006 and 2011, and in 2019 more widespread protests saw months of rioting, with metro stations and churches burned.</p> <p>Florencia Acevedo, a 16-year-old high school student in Santiago, said protests were the only way to be heard and while she did not agree with bus burnings or clashes with the police, she sympathized with the anger students felt.</p> <p>"I understand those who do it because you act with rage sometimes, shame and pain," she said, citing issues like schools missing basic infrastructure, including doors and decent bathrooms.</p> <p>"Adults don't take students seriously so we take over schools, because if we try to talk they don't listen," Acevedo said. "We regretfully live in a society that reacts to violence. If I give you violence, you give me what I want."</p>

	<p>Education Minister Antonio Avila told Reuters the issue was linked to wider social unease.</p> <p>Indigenous violence in the south has hit Boric's popularity, while a new constitution that was meant to help iron out deep-seated issues of inequality is at risk of failing to win enough support.</p> <p>"The problems that occur in school communities are a reflection of the problems we have as a society," Avila said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 China's weather is volatile: record rain, heat
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/science-china-japan-weather-tibet-86cad5a4fd19d662bc1be3ab760b18be
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — From the snowcapped peaks of Tibet to the tropical island of Hainan, China is sweltering under the worst heatwave in decades while rainfall hit records in June.</p> <p>Extreme heat is also battering Japan, and volatile weather is causing trouble for other parts of the world in what scientists say has all the hallmarks of climate change, with even more warming expected this century.</p> <p>The northeastern provinces of Shandong, Jilin and Liaoning saw precipitation rise to the highest levels ever recorded in June, while the national average of 112.1 millimeters (4.4 inches) was 9.1 % higher than the same month last year, the China Meteorological Administration said in a report Tuesday.</p> <p>The average temperature across the nation also hit 21.3 degrees Celsius (70.34 Fahrenheit) in June, up 0.9 C (1.8 F) from the same period month last year and the highest since 1961. No relief is in sight, with higher than usual temperatures and precipitation forecast in much of the country throughout July, the administration said.</p> <p>In the northern province of Henan, Xuchang hit 42.1 C (107.8 F) and Dengfeng 41.6 C (106.9 F) on June 24 for their hottest days on record, according to global extreme weather tracker Maximiliano Herrera.</p> <p>China has also seen seasonal flooding in several parts of the country, causing misery for hundreds of thousands, particularly in the hard-hit south that receives the bulk of rainfall as well as typhoons that sweep in from the South China Sea.</p> <p>China is not alone in experiencing higher temperatures and more volatile weather. In Japan, authorities warned of greater than usual stress on the power grid and urged citizens to conserve energy.</p> <p>Japanese officials announced the earliest end to the annual summer rainy season since the national meteorological agency began keeping records in 1951. The rains usually temper summer heat, often well into July.</p> <p>On Friday, the cities of Tokamachi and Tsunan set all-time heat records while several others broke monthly marks.</p> <p>Large parts of the Northern Hemisphere have seen extreme heat this summer, with regions from the normally chilly Russian Arctic to the traditionally sweltering American South recording unusually high temperatures and humidity.</p> <p>In the United States, the National Weather Service has held 30 million Americans under some kind of heat advisory amid record-setting temperatures. The suffering and danger to health is most intense among those without air conditioning or who work outdoors, further reinforcing the economic disparities in dealing with extreme weather trends.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 New Zealand faces new Covid wave
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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/05/new-zealand-faces-new-covid-wave-as-experts-say-moving-on-from-pandemic-is-wishful-thinking
GIST	<p>New Zealand is on the brink of another Omicron wave, experts warn, with average cases rising as immunity wanes, more infectious variants arrive, and winter sets in.</p> <p>Public health experts, however, are concerned that the public and government are primarily focused on “moving on” from the virus, after the country transitioned out of its Covid elimination strategy – and are not taking the necessary steps to try to reduce transmission.</p> <p>“There is every indication that ... the pandemic is getting more intense in New Zealand,” said Prof Michael Baker, a public health expert at the University of Otago.</p> <p>Cases have been steadily increasing and on Tuesday the country’s seven-day rolling average of community cases was 7,246, up from 5,480 this time last week and its highest point in over a month. Daily death rates and cases in hospital are also rising – this week marked 487 people in hospital, the highest rate since late April.</p> <p>On Tuesday, reported cases spiked to 9,629. Responding to the numbers, prime minister Jacinda Ardern said she had “no expectation” that stricter Covid restrictions would be required. “Keep in mind we have really important rules at the orange setting that are there to protect us,” she said.</p> <p>Microbiologist and Covid-19 communicator Dr Siouxsie Wiles said continuing with business as usual was based on “wishful thinking”.</p> <p>“I think there’s been this narrative around the world that you just get infected and get it over and done with,” she said. “None of these things were guaranteed.</p> <p>“There’s an element of wishful thinking, and there’s an element of ‘if we ignore it will go away’ – but of course that’s not what happens to problems when you ignore them.”</p> <p>“We need to do better,” Baker said. “We need to think quite clearly about [the] scenarios. If we carry on with this rate of transmission and mortality – in the order of 12-14 deaths a day – we’re hitting as many as 5000 deaths a year from the pandemic. That would add 15% to our annual mortality rate. It’s 15 times the road toll. It’s 10 times the mortality from influenza.”</p> <p>Faced with a growing body of evidence that people can be reinfected with Omicron within weeks of infection, the government last week changed its advice to isolate if you test positive within three weeks – rather than the previously recommended 90 days.</p> <p>Baker said recent data on the Omicron variants indicated that people can be re-infected within weeks – a blow to hopes that combined immunity from infection and vaccination would provide countries with a clear pathway out of the pandemic.</p> <p>Baker cited a large pre-print study from Veterans Affairs in the US, which has yet to be peer-reviewed. It found that when people were reinfected, their likelihood of long-term or serious complications remained similar each time, rather than diminishing – as hoped – from increased immunity.</p> <p>Baker said that meant each infection could be “a roll of the dice” for long Covid, organ damage, mental health and neurological effects and serious illness.</p> <p>“We’ve got very stark choices,” Baker said. “I think we have to decide: what level of infection can we tolerate, given what we know about this virus?”</p> <p>“What’s so frustrating is that we do have tools in our toolkit that will help reduce transmission,” Wiles said.</p>

	Baker, Wiles and other public health professionals are calling on the government – and wider New Zealand public – to embrace strategies like masks, ventilation, and self-isolation, which would delay spread of the virus without bringing daily life to a halt.
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HEADLINE	07/04 Threat of violence builds in Kenya
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/04/pressure-points-threat-of-violence-builds-as-kenyas-elections-approach
GIST	<p>As Kenya's presidential elections draw closer, the country's vulnerability to violence is back in evidence.</p> <p>Politicians here are infamous for inflaming underlying ethnic tensions, by touching on national pressure points, such as historical grievances over land. And this year's vote comes at a time when the rising cost of living has left many households struggling.</p> <p>The country has a difficult history with disputed elections. A contested 2007 poll resulted in more than 1,000 deaths. The potential for violence during August's elections stands at about 53%, according to a report by Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), due to pre-existing conflicts, possible triggers and weak electoral management institutions.</p> <p>Experts say political unrest escalates into violence when citizens don't trust the bodies handling the elections. The NCIC report showed that 26% of Kenyans trust the electoral commission and 23% trust the judiciary. The commission is already facing challenges in court over its bid to use an electronic voter identification system this year, with no physical register as back-up, despite having faced technological failures at the last two elections.</p> <p>Kenya's judiciary regained some trust in 2017 after the supreme court annulled the results which saw incumbent president, Uhuru Kenyatta, declared winner, due to widespread discrepancies. In a historic ruling, the court called for another election. However, Kenyatta's opponent, Raila Odinga, challenged the electoral body's ability to conduct fair elections, withdrew from the race and called on supporters to boycott the poll. Kenyatta duly became president as violence was met with police crackdowns in western Kenya and in Nairobi – where Odinga was favourite.</p> <p>Politicians are exploiting high youth unemployment, with some paying youth groups to cause violence and intimidate opponents, according to the NCIC report. Human rights organisation Haki Africa says it has seen an increase in attacks by armed groups in Mombasa in April and May. Mombasa and Nairobi, Kenya's largest cities, were categorised as highly vulnerable to violence by NCIC.</p> <p>A 28-year-old political campaigner from Kamukunji, one of Nairobi's informal settlements, spoke on condition of anonymity. He says politicians often pay groups of young people to intimidate their opponents and block them from campaigning in certain areas. He says that he doesn't get paid for violence but has worked closely with people who do.</p> <p>"You're paid after the work, and per turnout," he says, explaining that the politicians usually have a single trusted contact, who receives an electronic payment and then pays everyone else in cash. "The going rate varies. If you're working with someone who's politically connected, you get around 1,000 Kenyan shillings (£7) per turnout, but if you're not, you'll get only around 400KSh."</p> <p>They are not paid for direct violence usually, but he says, "When the politician is heckled but doesn't leave, some supporters will start to use violence."</p> <p>He supports the '<i>elections bila noma</i>' campaign – a movement for peaceful elections. "When a politician wins, that's his win. He doesn't have to deal with any of the fallout," he says. "Those who fought for them, who mainly just wanted to make quick money, have to live with the same communities they violently broke up during elections."</p>

Happy Olal, a social justice activist, says politicians encourage violence by portraying their win as inevitable. “The feeling that their candidate can’t lose causes tensions to blow up,” he says.

Areas such as Kamukunji are highly policed during elections. Olal says this makes outbreaks of violence become a self-fulfilling prophecy. “When you send trucks of police to these areas just a day or two before the polls, you’re essentially telling them – we’re here for you. What do you expect?”

Political analyst Joy Masinde thinks few want trouble: “The 2007 violence was a stain on the public conscience. It took us so long to recover from it that not many voters would be easily instigated into violence, even if you paid them,” she says.

Still, divisive politics continue to play out, particularly online. [A report by the Mozilla Foundation](#) showed that political content containing hate speech, incitement and misinformation is spreading on TikTok, despite being in violation of its policies. Videos with hashtags such as #siasa or #siasazakenya (Swahili for politics and Kenyan politics) have more than 20m views. “Kenyans are uploading and consuming tons of political content on the platform. Some people might actually be watching news on it,” says [Odanga Madung](#), the report’s author.

Madung says the threat is that “anything can go viral. You don’t even need to build an audience for that to happen.” A number of the political videos received outsized viewership, suggesting they may have been boosted by TikTok’s algorithm.

However, Masinde says: “The largest mass of voters are still offline. There isn’t enough of a critical mass on the app to cause any kind of movement,” she says. “A number of those who use it are either too young or politically indifferent.”

Madung agrees, saying that the biggest danger of disinformation is that it could erode Kenyans’ trust in the political class and breed disillusion, putting people off voting. “Disinformation is the low-hanging fruit. It’s easier to get voters disillusioned than to get them to go out on the streets.”

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HEADLINE	07/05 Tap pandemic savings to cope w/inflation
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/americans-tap-pandemic-savings-to-cope-with-inflation-11657013400?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>Americans are starting to dip into the huge pile of savings they accumulated over the first two years of the pandemic.</p> <p>From the start of the pandemic to the end of 2021, U.S. households built up \$2.7 trillion in extra savings, according to Moody’s Analytics. Covid-19 lockdowns kept people at home with nowhere to spend money, and three rounds of stimulus payments boosted their incomes.</p> <p>Now, with inflation at its highest point in decades and wage gains trailing behind, Americans are turning to that stash to cover costs.</p> <p>The personal saving rate, a measure of how much money people have left over after spending and taxes, reached 5.4% in May. That figure is below the average of the last decade and far below the record of 34% in April 2020, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Families have tapped about \$114 billion of their pandemic savings so far, according to Moody’s Analytics, which analyzed government data.</p> <p>“Most households have a cash cushion to navigate through the very high inflation,” said Mark Zandi, Moody’s Analytics chief economist. “This is allowing consumers to stay in the game.”</p> <p>Stimulus checks and expanded child-tax-credit payments helped Shannon Houston and her husband cover major expenses, including daycare. “It was just enough buffer to make things easier month to month,” said Ms. Houston.</p>

The child tax credit gave families up to \$300 per child each month in the second half of 2021, but that [ended in December](#). The federal government's last stimulus checks were sent more than a year ago.

Each month this year, the Connecticut couple has drawn on their savings, which includes money from the child tax credit as well as prepandemic savings. Higher prices are forcing the family to spend more on gas and groceries for their two children, Ms. Houston said.

Ms. Houston, 37 years old, works part time as a freelance communications specialist for nonprofit organizations but is considering returning to work full time when her son starts kindergarten in the fall. "We don't want to completely squander our savings," she said.

Americans' checking-account balances jumped after they got their pandemic stimulus payments, bank executives have said. While customers have spent some of that money, balances still remain markedly above where they were in 2019, said Chris Wheat, co-president of the JPMorgan Chase Institute, the bank's in-house think tank. At the end of March, balances of families with the lowest incomes were 65% above 2019 levels.

Still, they used to be higher. In March 2021, around the time of the third round of federal stimulus checks, balances for those families were up 126% from 2019 levels.

JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon last month said U.S. consumers still had between six and nine months of [spending power remaining](#) in their bank accounts.

Darius Palmer built up an investment account of more than \$5,000 by stashing away money from his paycheck and some earlier pandemic stimulus payments. But he turned to his credit card to cover costs for trips this year to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., when they were more expensive than he anticipated.

The 24-year-old industrial engineer is weighing different options for paying off the \$2,000 balance. He plans to cancel a meat-subscription service that costs around \$150 a month and buy fewer books. If the North Carolina resident can't cover the payment with his income, he plans to dip into his investments.

Mr. Palmer is also concerned about the potential end of the student-loan payment moratorium. The government paused payments on federal student loans in the spring of 2020, though borrowers might have to start making monthly payments again this fall.

"I know what it's like to have to tighten the belt," Mr. Palmer said.

The bottom 20% of earners was the only income group that didn't draw on their pandemic savings in the first quarter of the year, Moody's Analytics found. "These are folks working in leisure, hospitality, retail, healthcare," Mr. Zandi said. Strong wage growth has allowed many of these workers to continue to save.

Eric Cullen was laid off from his job at AmeriCorps at the start of the pandemic. Over the following months, he was able to save about half of his federal stimulus checks and unemployment payments.

The 27-year-old continued to increase his savings after he took a job at an upscale New Orleans restaurant in spring 2021, where he initially earned about \$500 a week as a busser and food runner. A staff shortage helped him get promoted to a waiter position, where he sometimes brought home as much as \$1,500 weekly.

Mr. Cullen recently moved back to his hometown near Albany, N.Y. He noticed gas prices going up steadily on the drive north from Louisiana. "I was initially taking this summer off," he said.

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HEADLINE	07/04 If US in recession, it is a very strange one
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/recession-economy-unemployment-jobs-11656947596?mod=hp_lead_pos6

The U.S. economy has experienced 12 recessions since World War II, and each one included two features: Economic output contracted and unemployment rose.

Today, something highly unusual is happening. Economic output fell in the first quarter and [signs suggest](#) it did so again in the second. Yet the job market showed little sign of faltering during the first half of the year. The jobless rate fell from 4% last December [to 3.6%](#) in May.

It is the latest strange twist in the odd trajectory of the pandemic economy, and a riddle for those contemplating a recession. If the U.S. is in or near one, it doesn't yet look like any other on record.

Analysts sometimes talked about "jobless recoveries" after past recessions, in which economic output rose but employers kept shedding workers. The first half of 2022 was the mirror image—a "jobful" downturn, in which output fell and companies kept hiring. Whether it will spiral into a fuller and deeper recession isn't known, though a growing number of economists believe it will.

Some companies, especially in the tech sector, have given indications that they're [pulling back on hiring](#), though across the broad economy the job market has rarely looked stronger.

At the end of June, [1.3 million Americans](#) were collecting federal unemployment checks, substantially fewer than the 1.7 million people collecting them on average each week during the three years before the pandemic, when the economy was considered to be exceptionally strong. The number of people receiving such benefits topped 6.5 million during the 2007-09 recession and exceeded 3 million during the two earlier downturns.

"I would be surprised if there were a recession without much job loss," said Gregory Mankiw, a Harvard University economics professor. He said if one is coming, it would likely be provoked by Federal Reserve [interest rate increases](#). A "small downturn" could be needed to bring inflation under control, he said.

The official arbiter of U.S. recessions is the National Bureau of Economic Research, a collection of mostly academic economists who place dates on when recessions begin and end, going back to 1857, the first U.S. recession on record. Mr. Mankiw served on the committee during the 1990s.

One popular rule of thumb is that the economy is in recession when gross domestic product—a measure of the nation's output of goods and services—contracts for two consecutive quarters, but that's not the way the NBER sees it. Its eight-member business cycle dating committee looks at a range of monthly and quarterly indicators, including output, income, manufacturing activity, business sales and, perhaps most important, employment levels. Then it makes a judgment call.

"A recession is a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, normally visible in production, employment, and other indicators," the committee says.

The indicators don't always move in sync. In 2001, output didn't decline much, and GDP didn't contract for two consecutive quarters, but the NBER called it a recession, anyway. In 1960, inflation-adjusted household income rose, and that was a recession, too.

One common denominator has been jobs. The unemployment rate has increased every time, by as little as 1.9 percentage points in 1960 and 1961 and as much as 11.2 percentage points in 2020. The median increase in the jobless rate among all 12 post-World War II recessions was 3.5 percentage points. The U.S. didn't escape any of those recessions with a jobless rate below 6.1%.

Monthly business payrolls, watched closely by the NBER, also have fallen in every recession, by about 3% in a typical one. Yet between December and May, payrolls rose 2.4 million, or 1.6%. They are a coincident indicator, meaning they tend to rise and fall in sync with broad economic activity.

On Friday the Labor Department will report nationwide figures for payrolls and unemployment for June, a potentially critical moment in the recession debate. Economists surveyed by The Wall Street Journal in advance of the report said they expected the Labor Department to report that the jobless rate held steady at 3.6% last month and payrolls kept expanding.

The backdrop to U.S. jobs is now unusual. The U.S. has recorded more than 11 million unfilled job openings in six of the past seven months, four million more monthly openings than was typical before Covid-19 hit the economy in early 2020. In other words, demand for workers is abundant.

At the same time, labor is scarce—in part because [baby boomers are retiring](#)—making firms reluctant to fire the workers they have. The size of the labor force, at 164.4 million in May, was still slightly smaller than the 164.6 million people who were working or looking for work right before the pandemic, so even when people do lose work, there have been many unfilled positions available.

Robert Gordon, a Northwestern University economics professor and member of the NBER's business cycle dating committee, said this might be a situation in which other indicators point to recession but the job market doesn't, or it lags behind atypically for several months.

"We are going to have a very unusual conflict between the employment numbers and the output numbers for a while," he said. Some other meaningful indicators, such as manufacturing and wholesaler sales, have also weakened, he added, making him wary that a recession is near. He noted he wasn't speaking for the committee or any decisions it might make.

Even the most pessimistic economists see a modest jobs downturn in the months ahead.

About two in five economists [surveyed by the Journal](#) in June said they saw at least a 50-50 chance that the U.S. enters recession in the coming year, but among them, few saw a big increase in the jobless rate. They forecast a 3.9% unemployment rate at the end of this year and a 4.6% unemployment rate at the end of 2023. The U.S. has never had a recession in the post-World War II era with a jobless rate that low.

"The U.S. is in, or on the precipice, of a shallow but yearlong recession. This will assist the Fed in its inflation fighting efforts," said Sean Snaith, director of the University of Central Florida's Institute for Economic Forecasting, in the Journal's survey. He sees the jobless rate rising to 6% by the end of 2023, the only person in the survey who saw the rate reaching that level in the next 18 months.

History shows that recessions come in many forms.

Some downturns have been long and deep, such as the downturn of 2007-09 that sent the unemployment rate to 10%; others short and shallow, such as the 2001 recession that lasted eight months. Others were part of serial downturns, as happened in the 1950s and 1980s, when recessions came in succession, a short time apart.

"Each recession seems to have a different driving force and different duration and impact on jobs and output," said Peter Klenow, a Stanford University economics professor. "I think of the 1980 recession as Carter credit controls, 1981-1982 as the Volcker recession, 1990-1991 as a credit crunch, 2001 the bursting of the dot-com bubble, 2008-2009 the global financial crisis, and 2020 the pandemic recession."

The 2020 recession, in particular, was unlike anything recorded in U.S. history, exceptionally short at just two months, and exceptionally severe. Companies cut 22 million jobs in those two months, 14 times more than they had ever cut in a two-month period during the post-Depression era.

This was a precursor to the turbulence still hitting the economy more than two years later, like waves in a lake after a boulder falls in.

Officials in Washington reacted to the Covid shock by flooding the economy with stimulus and boosting demand. Supply chains broke down, in part because of Covid-related business closures around the world. The surge of demand and the collapse of supply then bred higher inflation. The Fed is now trying to slow it by raising short-term interest rates to restrain demand for interest-sensitive spending, such as on cars, homes and business projects.

What happened in the first part of the year in part reflected volatility in the economy that followed Covid, compounded by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Businesses drew down inventories in the first quarter after building them up in 2021, according to Commerce Department data. The U.S. trade position also deteriorated, meaning fewer exports and more imports.

The inventory reductions were central to a contraction in gross domestic product at a 1.6% annual rate in the first quarter. Rather than build new cars or computer chips, companies took them off their own shelves.

A Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta model closely watched on Wall Street estimates that economic output contracted again in the second quarter, at a 2.1% annual rate. The model puts inventory reductions as the biggest downward weight on output.

Inventories are a business buffer for surprises, and cycles of inventory building and destocking have been common ingredients in the early stages of past recessions. Firms at times produce too much in anticipation of demand and then have to pull back when the demand doesn't materialize. In past cycles, production declines associated with inventory reductions set off a series of events that caused recessions, including layoffs, household income loss and then slowing consumer spending.

One risk now is that inventory cutting leads to wider business retrenchment that feeds on itself, as happened in some past recessions.

Another uncertainty is the outlook for home building, which is highly interest rate sensitive and has been another leading indicator during past downturns. New-home construction dropped 14% in May from a month earlier, seasonally adjusted, a drag that could persist as the Fed raises short-term interest rates.

Most post-World War II recessions have been associated with declines in residential home construction, though the hit this time may not be severe because building wasn't as overheated in recent years as it had been in the past. For example, in the first quarter, total U.S. spending on home-building was still 22% below the pace of building at the peak of the housing boom of the early 2000s, according to Commerce Department data.

Bruce Kasman, chief economist at J.P. Morgan, predicts a "bend-but-don't-break" scenario for the economy, meaning a sharp slowdown in activity that doesn't crack the job market. However, he adds that he doesn't have great conviction about that prediction, given the unusual backdrop and the shocks that keep hitting the economy.

Though corporate profits are slowing, he said, corporate profit margins are exceptionally high, historically. At around 18% of sales during the past year, after-tax profits have rarely been higher in post-World War II history. Heading into recessions in 1991 and 2001, firm profit margins had fallen to single digit levels. Firms cut back on spending to build profits, and dragged the economy down in the process.

Mr. Kasman said firms now have a large cushion to the growing profit slowdown. Businesses are also swimming in nearly \$4 trillion of cash, a record, he said, and another cushion.

Slow growth and continued hiring would add up to productivity and profit pressures for many businesses. That would be bad news for stocks, he said. But a recession? He's not counting on it.

	Households are flush with cash, too. At the end of the first quarter, they had \$18.5 trillion in checking accounts, savings accounts and money market mutual funds, according to Fed data. That was up from \$13.3 trillion before the pandemic, boosted in part by several rounds of relief checks sent to households in the past two years.
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HEADLINE	07/04 Lessons of Russia's war in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/lessons-of-russias-war-in-ukraine-you-cant-hide-and-weapons-stockpiles-are-essential-11656927182?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—Western governments are bracing for a protracted conflict with Russia over Ukraine, and military leaders are racing to distill lessons from the opening months of Europe's largest land war in almost eight decades.</p> <p>President Biden and North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg last week pledged to support Ukrainian forces for as long as it takes for Kyiv to prevail. How long that means will depend in large part on how fighting plays out, and both sides are trying to adapt.</p> <p>Defense planners are studying weapons, tactics, logistics and other factors for insights that can give them an edge on the current battlefield—and in future conflicts.</p> <p>“We’ve been watching the war in Ukraine closely, and we are already learning and adapting,” Gen. Patrick Sanders, the new chief of Britain’s general staff, said in a recent speech. “We will rethink how we fight.”</p> <p>The conflict is drawing close attention—and has become something of a laboratory for professional soldiers—not just because it is proving so deadly to fighters and civilians, or because it is the first big war to play out in near-real-time on social media.</p> <p>The war in Ukraine is the first in decades involving large, fairly modern and roughly evenly matched forces. Others over recent decades have either pitted cutting-edge forces against less modern foes, as in the two Gulf wars and Afghanistan, or were on a smaller scale.</p> <p>Some lessons aren’t all that new, such as the value of strong leadership and resilient supply lines. Others are: The modern battlefield has no hiding places and no boundaries. Drones, electronic surveillance and space-based observation make concealment harder than even a few years ago.</p> <p>Gen. Sanders said Russia’s invasion shows that “if you want to avert conflict, you better be prepared to fight.” Military thinkers say it is also a wake-up call for citizens of the West who have come to see war as something distant and high-tech, executed with surgical precision.</p> <p>Instead, the fighting in Ukraine has been a devastating war of attrition, waged with heavy artillery, evoking memories of fighting in the two world wars.</p> <p>“Maybe modern war isn’t as modern as people thought,” said Billy Fabian, a former U.S. Defense Department analyst and Army infantry officer, now a senior manager at Govini, a company that harnesses high technology for decision-making at clients including the Pentagon.</p> <p>“Mass offensive warfare is difficult and awful, with tremendous losses,” he said.</p> <p>At NATO’s annual summit last week, officials touted the value of trans-Atlantic cooperation in waging war. Alliance officials say it became evident in 2011, when NATO intervened in Libya’s civil war and European forces had to depend on U.S. munitions due to low stocks.</p> <p>In the current conflict, cooperation ranges from weapons supplies to sanctions on Russia. The unity hasn’t defeated the Russians, but it has multiplied the impact of Western aid on the war, say officials.</p>

Relentless bombardments from both sides have made clear the importance of ready stocks of weapons and munitions. Russia's enormous quantities have given it [a battlefield advantage](#) lately, but some open-source intelligence analysts suggest that Moscow might now be running low on certain ammunition.

Ukraine's Western allies, meanwhile, are having to rethink military-industrial plans after shipping to Kyiv [large numbers of weapons and munitions](#) that planners had assumed their own forces would use some day.

"A lesson of Ukraine is we need more insights and transparency in stockpiles," said a senior NATO official. "What you can expend in days or hours takes weeks to resupply and years to build."

Both sides are using drones to locate and attack targets, and Ukrainians have exploited light, mobile weapons supplied by Western allies to hit bigger, better-armed Russian targets. But most of the damage being inflicted on both armies—and on Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure—is from missiles, rockets and bombs that have been used for years.

"What we're seeing is conventional mechanized war with modern characteristics," said Mr. Fabian.

Ukrainians protected their capital, Kyiv, and other cities from Russian tanks and armored vehicles in the war's opening weeks by deftly employing portable rocket launchers provided by Western allies.

While some observers said the rout foretold the death of the tank, others said what it really showed was the need for well-coordinated maneuvers involving a variety of troops and weapons, known as combined-arms tactics.

"We will double-down on combined arms maneuver, especially in the deep battle," said Britain's Gen. Sanders. "Success will be determined by combined arms and multi-domain competence. And mass."

He said that while the digital transformation of warfare is vital, "to put it bluntly, you can't cyber your way across a river. No single platform, capability, or tactic will unlock the problem."

Tacticians say new approaches could include greater use of small, inexpensive systems, such as Turkey's Bayraktar TB2, the U.S.'s Switchblade drones and NLAW mobile rockets from Britain.

With electronic surveillance now pervasive, planners are seeking ways to operate without emitting radio signals. Some reconnaissance drones are sent on preset missions and return to base carrying intelligence, rather than transmitting it.

Others are sent on preset attack missions. Low-tech solutions from earlier eras—like using runners during urban warfare—are also getting a fresh look.

Likely detection means that systems such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or Himars, which the U.S. is supplying Ukraine, are increasingly valuable. They can launch attacks and relocate before detection, or shoot-and-scoot in military parlance.

The next step is better integrating these emerging approaches, and doing it across traditional divisions of military services because old distinctions between land, naval and air war are disappearing. In a paper for the U.S. National Defense University publication Joint Forces Quarterly in 2018, two senior officers proposed an integrated approach dubbed multidomain battle.

In it, Army Gen. David G. Perkins and Air Force Gen. James M. Holmes, both since retired, proposed their multidomain approach to overcome divisions between the Army, Navy and other services and "build the future force as a converged and integrated solution."

	<p>Other lessons build on long experience. Ukrainian forces have been outgunned and outnumbered, but they have fought fiercely to protect their homeland and so have held out far longer and more successfully than many Western military officials predicted they could in February.</p> <p>“The will to fight is decisive,” said NATO’s Mr. Stoltenberg. He cited not just “the commitment of Ukrainian troops, but also of the Ukrainian people to defend their own country.”</p> <p>Eight years of training by NATO and its members and new command structures that empowered lower-rank troops have also made a big difference, Ukrainian soldiers and defense officials have said.</p> <p>On the other hand, a line from the Cold War used in reference to the Soviet Union’s vast number of unsophisticated weapons still rings true: Quantity is a quality in itself.</p> <p>Russia’s supplies of artillery pieces and shells have allowed Moscow to gain ground in eastern Ukraine over recent weeks, even as troops have shown signs of poor morale and discipline.</p> <p>“Even an incompetent army can still destroy your country,” said Jamie Shea, a retired senior NATO official. “An army may not be very motivated, but the artillery certainly is.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Coal makes a comeback
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/coal-makes-a-comeback-as-the-world-thirsts-for-energy-11656936180?mod=hp_list_pos3
GIST	<p>An energy-starved world is turning to coal as natural-gas and oil shortages exacerbated by Russia’s war against Ukraine lead countries back to the dirtiest fossil fuel.</p> <p>From the U.S. to Europe to China, many of the world’s largest economies are increasing short-term coal purchases to ensure sufficient supplies of electricity, despite prior pledges by many countries to reduce their coal consumption to combat climate change.</p> <p>The global competition for coal—also now in short supply after years of declining investment in new mines and resources—has driven benchmark prices to new records this year. Spot coal prices at Australia’s Newcastle port, a key supplier to Asia, topped \$400 a ton for the first time last month.</p> <p>The push is being led by Europe, which is boosting coal purchases to ensure it can keep power flowing to homes and factories after Russia cut gas supplies to the continent. Germany, which has promised to eliminate coal as a power source by 2030, is among the nations now importing more. Economy Minister Robert Habeck called the increased reliance on coal bitter but necessary.</p> <p>“Right now the sentiment is that more coal is better than more Russia,” said Alex Msimang, a London-based partner at law firm Vinson & Elkins LLP specializing in the energy sector.</p> <p>Parts of the U.S. are boosting use of coal power, as high demand for electricity amid unusually hot temperatures pushes regional power grids to the brink of blackouts this summer.</p> <p>China, the world’s biggest coal consumer, is expanding production of the fuel and its use in power generation, spooked by shortages last year that caused electricity cuts and outages throughout the country, energy experts say.</p> <p>India is also leaning hard on coal as energy demand increases. The nation’s coal-power generation hit a record in April, said Rahul Tongia, a senior fellow at New Delhi-based think tank the Centre for Social and Economic Progress.</p>

Domestic coal production in China and India helped drive a 10% increase in global investment in 2021, the International Energy Agency reported last month. The IEA projects another 10% increase this year as China and India try to stave off shortages.

Coal miners such as Anglo-Swiss giant [Glencore](#) PLC [are cashing in](#). Glencore, one of the last major miners still big in coal, said last month that it now [expected \\$3.2 billion in trading profit](#) in the first half of this year, compared with \$3.7 billion for all of 2021.

“We expect elevated coal prices to make Glencore one of the leading shareholder-return companies in the market,” Deutsche Bank AG analysts wrote.

Coal use fell in many major Western countries over the past decade, displaced by cleaner forms of energy that became more cost-competitive. Natural gas became more plentiful thanks to the [American fracking boom](#) and Russian exports to Europe. Renewable energy sources such as [wind and solar power](#) also gained market share, buoyed by falling prices and government subsidies and mandates.

Still, global [coal demand held strong](#), fueled by fast-growing energy needs in much of the rest of the world—and is on track to hit record highs this year, according to forecasts by the IEA.

The resurgence of coal, which emits around double the carbon dioxide as burning natural gas, further threatens to set back international efforts to keep global temperatures under 2 degrees Celsius from preindustrial levels, and preferably close to 1.5 degrees, by the end of the century.

That is the goal that more than 190 nations agreed to pursue under [the 2015 Paris Agreement](#) to avoid the most dangerous potential consequences of global warming. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that [emissions, which continue to rise](#), would need to be drastically reduced by the end of the decade to meet the goal.

Climate activists and forecasters say they are concerned about a rise in coal use, but see it as a short-term phenomenon in the West and are more worried that [the Ukraine war](#) and other geopolitical events are spurring [new natural-gas investments](#) that could operate for decades.

“It can be justified but not for long,” said Bill Hare, chief executive of the Berlin-based group Climate Analytics, of the coal surge.

While many countries are racing to lock up coal supplies in the short run, they aren’t entering into new extended contracts with coal miners, lawyers and industry consultants say. That contrasts with the natural-gas market, where some countries have begun signing long-term deals with shippers in the U.S. and Qatar for liquefied natural gas, or LNG.

Still, efforts to wean Western nations off Russian energy figure to strain global supplies for the foreseeable future. In April, the European Union agreed to ban imports of Russian coal. Before the war, Russia was Europe’s largest supplier of the thermal coal used in power generation, and the ban affected around 70% of the supply that European power stations require, according to Rystad Energy.

In addition to Germany, Italy, France, the U.K., the Netherlands and Austria have now said they are preparing to restart coal-fired power plants, boost their production or keep them running longer than planned. Many countries say they are trying to build up stockpiles of natural gas ahead of winter, when it is in high demand as a heating fuel.

Countries are rejiggering distribution channels to obtain more coal from other big suppliers such as Australia and the U.S., but that takes time and money, said Gerben Hieminga, senior energy-sector economist for Dutch bank ING Groep.

“The whole world is doing this,” Mr. Hieminga said.

	<p>The U.S. can only increase so much without pouring significantly more money into coal production, limiting the duration of the current windfall, said Chris Walker, a 14-year veteran of St. Louis-based coal miner Peabody Energy Corp. who until last year led the company's international marketing and trading operation.</p> <p>"They're trying to get more tons out today with no long-term impact on capital," said Mr. Walker, now an industry consultant.</p> <p>The kind of coal production most easily scaled up is lower-quality coal, generally mined close to the surface, that is less efficient and can satisfy only a fraction of Europe's coal-import needs, said Natalie Biggs, head of thermal-coal market analysis at energy consulting firm Wood Mackenzie. The competition for high-quality coal has so distorted global trade that some Russian coal that normally wouldn't be economical to ship to India through Baltic Sea ports is now making that trip, she said, though that Russian coal is selling at a relative discount.</p> <p>Climate watchdogs worry Asia could stay hooked on coal for longer than previously projected. China, the world's largest greenhouse-gas emitter, already comprises around half of the world's coal-power capacity, with plants accounting for nearly a third of global coal consumption, according to energy data trackers.</p> <p>The country is still building new coal plants at a rapid clip, at risk of oversupply, "because it can't afford a power shortage," says Ryna Cui, co-director of the China program at the University of Maryland's Center for Global Sustainability.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 Chaos unfolds at 4th July fireworks events
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/05/july-fourth-fireworks-shooting-chaos/
GIST	<p>Scenes of chaos unfolded at Fourth of July celebrations in cities nationwide, as the booming sounds of fireworks were apparently mistaken for gunshots, sending scores of revelers fleeing for cover.</p> <p>Crowds panicked and ran from loud noises in Orlando, Harrisburg, Pa., and Washington, suggesting a nation on edge following a recent spate of high-profile mass shootings, including one Monday morning in Highland Park, Ill., that killed six people.</p> <p>"It is devastating that a celebration of America was ripped apart by our uniquely American plague," Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D) said Monday. "While we celebrate the Fourth of July just once a year, mass shootings have become our weekly — yes weekly — American tradition."</p> <p>The bloodshed in the Chicago suburb of about 30,000 shattered the Fourth of July festivities. The aftermath of Highland Park's parade was not candy wrappers and loose streamers, but pooled blood and abandoned strollers after residents fled the scene, taking shelter for hours as a manhunt unfolded.</p> <p>In other cities, Americans were on high alert in public spaces, sensitive to loud noises and quick to disperse.</p> <p>At a fireworks show in downtown Orlando, people fled as loud pops echoed throughout the area, and some spectators suffered minor injuries during the commotion, police said. Some people jumped into a nearby lake, an eyewitness told a local news channel. Authorities said that there was no shooting and that the confusion had probably been caused by the sound of fireworks.</p> <p>In Harrisburg, the sound of firecrackers being thrown on the ground was probably the cause of panic among hundreds of people right before the main fireworks show, police told the local ABC News affiliate. Authorities likewise said there was no shooting. "The fact that you have to be ready for a mass shooting at any moment is proof of a country rotten to its core," wrote a Twitter user who said he was there.</p>

	<p>In D.C., two loud noises near 11th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW prompted people nearby to flee toward the National Mall. Authorities on the scene confirmed the sounds were fireworks and said the noises probably sparked the alarm.</p> <p>In Philadelphia, the sound of gunfire sent a crowd fleeing an event near the city center. Videos circulating on social media showed some attempting to scale safety barriers as a fireworks display went off in the background.</p> <p>Two police officers were shot but have been released after being treated at a hospital, according to Philadelphia's police commissioner, Danielle Outlaw. She said that law enforcement was pursuing leads but that no arrests have been made.</p> <p>Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenny, voicing exasperation with U.S. gun control laws, told reporters he looked forward to the day he leaves his role because he was always worried about a possible shooting at big events.</p> <p>"I'm concerned every single day...I'm waiting for something bad to happen all the time, so I'll be happy when I'm not mayor," Kenny said late Monday.</p> <p>"We have to come to grips with what this country is about right now," he said. "We had a beautiful day out there today except for some nitwit shooting ... who has a gun and probably shouldn't have had it."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Inflation making homelessness worse
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/07/03/inflation-homeless-rent-housing/
GIST	<p>The sheriffs arrived at 6 a.m. in early June to tell Josanne English what she already knew: She was being evicted.</p> <p>She'd lost her job as a project manager near Sacramento in April, then fell behind on rent as \$6-a-gallon gas and higher costs for food and utilities depleted her monthly budget. By the time she lost her home two months later, she owed \$9,160 in rent and late fees, and her bank account was nearing zero.</p> <p>She received \$1,300 in housing assistance from the county, but that didn't go very far in an area where the average asking rent has ballooned to nearly \$2,800 a month. After a week in a hotel, English and her partner sent their three children to live with relatives while they slept in their Hyundai SUV and showered at the gym.</p> <p>"I made good money — last year I made almost \$100,000 — and I can't believe this happened to me," she said. "But with prices the way they are, it can literally happen to anybody."</p> <p>Rising housing costs, combined with persistent inflation for basic necessities such as gas and food, have left more Americans newly homeless and millions more fearing they'll soon lose their homes. Shelters across the country are reporting a sudden increase in numbers of people looking for help as they struggle to cover basics. Inflation has reached 40-year highs just as many vulnerable families are readjusting to life without a boost from government stimulus or protections to keep them from being evicted.</p> <p>A rise in homelessness is the latest example of a recovery further separating the haves from the have nots. Soaring house prices have allowed existing homeowners to see their wealth balloon. Meanwhile, for a growing number of Americans, simply finding a place to spend the night is becoming more expensive and out of reach.</p> <p>"We're in a very precarious moment, where the cost of living is going up so quickly — through the price of gas and food and rent — that more people can't afford a place to live anymore," said Meredith Greif, an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University whose work focuses on homelessness and inequality. "Everywhere you turn, prices are rising, but wages aren't keeping up."</p>

There is limited national data on how many people are unhoused, especially since the pandemic began. In January 2020, there were more than 580,000 people in America experiencing homelessness, [according to](#) the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

In interviews, shelter officials in 15 states all reported a dramatic increase in the number of people, particularly single mothers, seeking services this year. In some cases, waitlists have doubled or tripled in a matter of months.

In the past, homelessness has often befallen those going through hard times after losing a job, shouldering unexpected medical expenses or dealing with ongoing health problems. However, this time around, shelters say they're seeing a rise in families who still have steady, even good-paying, jobs but cannot find a home they can afford.

That growing sense of despair is palpable at Atlanta Mission, a homeless shelter where more people are talking about inflation-related burdens when they walk in the door. "Evicted from my apartment due to being behind on rent. Sleeping outside," one person responded on an intake questionnaire. "Unable to find housing that meets her income," another wrote.

"Before, there was a pretty big discrepancy between people who were living paycheck to paycheck, and those who weren't," said Rachel Reynolds, communications manager for Atlanta Mission. "I can imagine that we're going to continue to see different types of people coming to our doors based on the sheer cost of living."

Sabrina Barger-Turner has been living in hotels in Harford County, Md., with her two sons since her lease was terminated in early March 2020 after she struggled to pay her rent on time. But she said rising nightly rates — combined with higher costs for gas and groceries — are making it difficult to afford even that, which means she's spending more nights in her Nissan Cube while the kids, ages 8 and 13, stay with family.

Barger-Turner, 36, says it would be cheaper to pay a monthly lease than cobbling together \$89-a-night hotels, but her credit score is dinged by her children's medical debt. She lost her \$60,000 a year accounting job shortly after her son was hospitalized with severe asthma in 2019. The piecemeal work she has picked up since then is barely enough to scrape by, but also keeps her from qualifying for a new apartment, she added.

Her food stamps recently lapsed because the renewal paperwork went to a defunct address. She sells homemade jewelry online and sometimes picks up delivery gigs for DoorDash, though she says skyrocketing gas prices have made that cost-prohibitive.

"There is nothing I want more than to give my kids a bed of their own, so they don't have to live like this," she said. "Today when we switched hotels, there was a downpour. I tried to talk it up to them like it was an adventure, like this was fun. But this is anything but fun."

Even among those who are still in their homes, the prospect of suddenly being displaced is creeping closer. An estimated 13.7 million Americans were behind on rent or mortgage payments in early June, up 7 percent from April, according to the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey. Of those, 4.6 million adults say they are "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to lose their homes by eviction or foreclosure in the next two months, a 32 percent increase from early April.

Jeannie Jansen received foreclosure papers three weeks ago: She has until July 8 to pay \$5,000 in overdue property taxes or she loses her home in western New York.

Jansen, 55, lives on \$980 a month in Social Security disability payments. She said there's no way to make the numbers work. She paid off her \$48,000 mobile home in Wyoming, N.Y., years ago, but said she'll likely be living in her Dodge Nitro SUV. Skyrocketing home values have lifted the median home

price in her county by 16 percent in the past year, leaving her with higher property taxes just as groceries, gas and prescription medications have all gotten more expensive.

“If I lose my home, I’m going to fall further behind than ever,” said Jansen, who owned a cleaning company until she was diagnosed with a lung condition and immunodeficiency disorder in 2009. “I busted my butt for years to have what we have. I went without heat this winter. I’ve gone without everything. And it’s still not enough because prices are so high.”

Every \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9 percent increase in the estimated homelessness rate, according to a 2020 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Economists say that figure is particularly troubling as rents continue to soar to unprecedented highs. The national median asking rent jumped to a record \$2,002 in May, up 15 percent from \$1,738 a year ago, according to Redfin.

For months, Venus Lopez had a work-from-home job but no home. Lopez, 35, was priced out of her Tucson apartment in October and moved into a Super 8 motel with her three sons. She tried to keep working, but the property’s spotty internet connection made it next to impossible. Last month, she lost her job; her bosses said they’d love to hire her back after she finds a permanent home.

Meanwhile, local rents have risen 22 percent from the beginning of the pandemic, making Lopez’s \$1,100 budget feel increasingly impossible. She pays \$483 a week for a motel room she shares with her sons, ages 3, 5 and 14, but is almost out of money. The few affordable places she’s found have months-long wait lists. She’s already borrowed money from her mother and a cousin, and has nowhere left to turn.

“With prices of everything going up, it’s becoming a challenge to even maintain what we have,” Lopez said. “Finding an affordable apartment keeps getting more unrealistic.”

The housing-affordability crisis is on the minds of policymakers trying to rein in inflation. The Fed has begun aggressively raising interest rates in the hope of dampening the economy, including the housing market, to bring down prices. While there are already signs that higher mortgage rates have led to a cooling-off in home sales, economists say it will take much longer for that slowdown to trickle down to the rental industry.

For the Fed, the challenge will be getting control of soaring prices without inflicting even more pain.

“You can’t describe the average person experiencing this. And that’s what is often lost,” Mary Daly, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, told The Post. “We cannot forget that a lot of these people were displaced and disrupted for literally no fault of their own. A pandemic came and it made everything more precarious, and then there’s the everyday precariousness.”

Experts say that about 20 percent of people without a home are considered chronically homeless and living on the streets or in shelters. The vast majority lack a permanent address but are patching together living arrangements however they can.

“Once you’re out of housing, even if you’re living in your own car, you’ve already fallen off the cliff,” said Greif of Johns Hopkins. “You don’t have a permanent address or a bed or a place to shower anymore, and that makes everything else harder. All of the basics in life start to disappear.”

Most people experiencing homelessness are able to find housing within a year, she said. But being displaced, however briefly, can easily trigger other major setbacks, such as job loss and long-term financial uncertainty.

English, the laid-off project manager evicted in Sacramento, found an administrative job at a construction company. But she was often late to work and distracted because of her living situation. When she finally told her boss she had been sleeping in her car, he gave her a \$6,000 advance to cover a

deposit on an apartment. On Saturday, she and her family moved into a three-bedroom rental that costs \$2,500 a month.

Even so, things have been difficult. She has depleted her savings and stocks, and she doesn't get her next paycheck until Tuesday. In the meantime she's been bouncing checks to fill up her gas tank. Her checking account is overdrawn by \$436.

"I thought everything would be fine once I got housed, but it's not," she said. "I'm depressed. ...We are literally starting over from scratch."

In Springfield, Mo., Jordan Evans and her husband have been living in their 2012 Honda CRV after being evicted on June 7. They sleep in a Home Depot parking lot.

Evans applied to move into a studio where the rent is \$800 a month. Rents in the area rose 9 percent since the pandemic began, according to CoStar Group data. But even if they hear back, they can't afford it. Evans has worked a handful of retail and housekeeping jobs since the pandemic, but fear of getting sick and cut back hours have slashed her income. She and her husband, who has type 1 diabetes, shop at Walmart for groceries that can withstand the 90-degree heat: bagels, bags of chips, tuna packets. McDonalds or Taco Bell are options "if we can afford it," Jordan said. They can't justify paying \$158 for window coverings, which means she sometimes wakes up to people peering into the car.

"Some apartments have gone up by \$20 [per month], some by \$150," she said. "It's really hard to find an apartment just in Missouri in general. And in the 20 days we've been living in our car, we've noticed so many other people living out of their cars, as well."

Friday was Evans's 23rd birthday. She traveled to Arkansas to be with her sister — and avoid spending a 24th night in her car.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Russia advances in brutal barrage
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/04/world/europe/russia-ukraine-donbas-strategy.html
GIST	<p>Russia's capture of the cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, a significant victory for Moscow's campaign to conquer eastern Ukraine, demonstrates the success of the Russian military's grinding strategy based on superior firepower and incremental advances.</p> <p>It also raises serious questions about how long either side can keep going like this, particularly the battered and vastly outgunned Ukrainian forces, forced to rely on raw recruits and suffering heavy casualties, along with the mental strain of combat, retreat and constant Russian shelling.</p> <p>Russia's invasion has taken a brutal toll on its own forces as well, but they continue their slow advance, and with the seizure of Lysychansk this weekend, they have taken control of the entirety of Luhansk Province, putting them in position to push on toward Ukrainian-held cities in Donetsk Province.</p> <p>The devastating strategy, relying heavily on long-range artillery, suits the flat terrain and shorter Russian supply lines in the east, but might not work elsewhere. And it remains unclear how far President Vladimir V. Putin intends to press the offensive, or how much more loss of men and matériel his military can absorb without needing a long pause to rebuild.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials say that their goal is to inflict maximum pain on the Russians by forcing them to fight for cities, as happened in Sievierodonetsk and to a lesser extent in Lysychansk, but both cities fell, and now there are rising doubts about that approach. The strategy is also divisive among Ukrainian troops, some of whom believe that attempting to hold cities is fruitless.</p>

“For me, human life is more important than the name Lysychansk,” Lt. Col. Yuri Bereza, 52, a battalion commander in Ukraine’s National Guard, said days before the Ukrainians decided to abandon the city rather than fight block by bloody block, as they had in neighboring Sievierodonetsk.

Volodymyr, a volunteer soldier who was one of the last members of his unit to pull out of Sievierodonetsk in June, said he had lost more than half his company of around 100 soldiers during the battle. He summarized the battle with an expletive.

“What support?” he asked. “There was no support.”

He nodded, however, at the Ukrainian T-80 tank across the street, saying tank units did come to the soldiers’ aid when artillery backup did not.

Early in the war, Russian forces attempting to quickly seize Kyiv, the capital, overextended their troops and armored columns, leaving them with little support, and suffered a stinging defeat by the Ukrainians. Moscow then shifted its focus to the mineral-rich, industrial Donbas region in the east — Luhansk and Donetsk — and changed its strategy.

Now, Russian troops rarely advance without an overwhelming amount of backing, often in the form of heavy artillery bombardment — even if that means that what Moscow captures is in ruins. Ukrainian soldiers say that the shelling lasts for about five days before Russian forces begin testing Ukrainian lines with foot soldiers and tanks.

The fighting has clearly exhausted both sides. Ukrainian officials have estimated that their forces are suffering hundreds of casualties a day; Western intelligence puts Russian deaths and injuries at a similar level.

Ukrainian forces are increasingly relying on lesser-trained troops such as those from the territorial defense forces and National Guard to supplement exhausted units on the front lines. And Russia has turned to reinforcements such as Wagner paramilitary units, pro-Moscow Chechen forces and separatist fighters from Luhansk and Donetsk to reinforce their casualty-plagued units.

On Monday, Mr. Putin ordered that the troops involved in capturing Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk rest and “increase their combat capabilities” while other Russian formations continue fighting.

Both sides have played down reports of faltering morale in their ranks, sometimes posting motivational videos on social media to counter the notion that anyone in the trenches is exhausted. And even as casualties wear them down, Ukrainian troops are displaying a willingness to continue fighting, no matter the cost.

“We’ll go back” said Volodymyr, after retreating from Sievierodonetsk. “This is our land. This is how it is.”

But this method of fighting — an artillery war — can produce intense psychological trauma, much as in World War I, the conflict that gave rise to the term “shell shock.” Ukrainian commanders, especially of replacement units, worry that some of their soldiers are suffering from stress, on top of the risk of being wounded or killed by enemy fire.

“During the artillery shelling, all you can do is lay in the shelter and wait for the shelling to end,” said Volodymyr, a Ukrainian platoon commander who recently came off the front in the Donbas. “Some people get mentally damaged because of such shelling. They are found to be psychologically not ready for whatever they encounter.”

Volodymyr, who declined to provide his surname out of security concerns, said that one person had been killed in his platoon and two had to leave the front because of mental trauma.

More than four months into the war, Ukrainians remain angry and defiant. But among civilians — millions of them displaced, out of work and living in fear, some lacking adequate food, water and electricity — the mood is increasingly somber. As the Russians gain ground and losses mount, with no end in sight, some Ukrainians accuse their government of minimizing the challenges ahead in a bid to raise morale.

Yulia Fedotovskiyh, 32, a public relations manager in Kyiv, said that earlier in the war, scrolling images on social media of dead Russian soldiers helped her feel safer. Now, she says, she just tries to avoid the news.

“I realize and have accepted that I can die at any moment, and so I just live my life,” she said.

In an early sign of the violence likely coming, Russian forces have increased their shelling of population centers near the front lines in recent days.

At least six people were killed in Sloviansk on Sunday and more than a dozen were injured by Russian rockets, Ukrainian authorities said. In a Facebook post, Vadym Lyakh, the mayor of Sloviansk, said it was the city’s most severe shelling since the Russian invasion began on Feb. 24. The head of the regional military administration, Pavlo Kyrilenko, said Monday in a post on the Telegram messaging app that Russian forces had killed nine civilians in Donetsk Province in the previous 24 hours.

In his nightly video address, President Volodymyr Zelensky warned that the Russians “have now accumulated their largest firepower in Donbas, and they can use tens of thousands of artillery shells every day on one section of the front.”

But he vowed once again to retake the lost territory. “We will return,” he said, “thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons.”

In the south, near the Russian controlled port-city of Kherson, Ukrainian forces have made a series of small gains over the past month. And though military analysts say these incremental victories are a sign of a coming broader counteroffensive, Ukrainian military officers have downplayed the fighting and acknowledged that the focus is on the east.

Kyiv has frequently called for more Western-supplied weapons and ammunition. And while some have made it to the front and proved successful in combat, especially the recently arrived HIMARS [multiple rocket launch system](#) from the United States, any longer-term Ukrainian success on the battlefield would require much more.

“There is a problem with ammunition,” Colonel Bereza said. “For example, for our one shot, they would fire 50 shots. How can you fight this?”

But he said that the situation improved somewhat, and that “we are waiting for the help from the West with artillery, with machines.”

Ammunition shortages in the Ukrainian military, especially for its Soviet-era long-range artillery pieces, have left its forces transitioning between that weaponry and newer, Western-supplied equipment that requires extensive training. The United States and its allies are providing that training outside Ukraine, but the pace is not meeting the demand, and some of those trained have been killed or injured.

A Ukrainian officer who works with U.S.-supplied M777 howitzers said that several officers and howitzer gunners who trained in Latvia had been killed or wounded during the fighting.

“The artillery from the enemy worked 24/7, and our artillery could do something three or four times a day,” said Olena, a military medic who declined to provide her surname out of security concerns. “And then it could miss the target. There were problems with correcting the fire.”

For both sides, air support has mostly been a secondary part of the fighting in Donbas, or even absent. Russia and Ukraine both have significant air defenses in place in the east, meaning that most jets and

helicopters have to fly dangerously low to provide a modicum of support for ground forces. That has left Russian forces firing cruise missiles to target key infrastructure behind the front lines.

In recent days, the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said, its forces carried out more than a dozen air missions in Ukraine's south and east, destroying some Russian equipment. Last week, a Ukrainian Su-24 ground attack aircraft was seen flying at treetop level toward Lysychansk, a rarity in the Donbas.

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HEADLINE	07/05 Less testing, reporting blur real-time data
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/05/us/covid-testing-data.html
GIST	<p>At a glance, the pandemic picture in the United States may seem remarkably stable. The average number of new confirmed coronavirus cases per day has hardly budged for weeks, hovering between 95,000 and 115,000 a day each day in June.</p> <p>A closer look shows that as public testing sites run by state and local governments have winnowed, more states have also stopped giving daily data updates, creating a foggier look at the state of virus across the country. That comes as federal estimates say the rapidly spreading Omicron subvariants known as BA.4 and BA.5 have together become dominant among new U.S. cases.</p> <p>The reduction in public testing means that lab-based P.C.R. testing capacity in July will be only half of what it was in March, according to a recent estimate by Health Catalysts Group, a research and consulting firm. Even a few testing companies announced layoffs and closures last week.</p> <p>The vast majority of the positive results from popular home test kits are not included in official data, and not everyone who gets infected knows or gets tested. Many Americans appear to be moving even further away from focusing on daily case counting — which, to be sure, have always been an undercount of total infections — as a measure of the nation's pandemic health. But other Americans with risk factors have said that they feel ignored and abandoned as their governments and neighbors have sought a return to normal.</p> <p>And some scientists estimate that the current wave of cases is the second largest of the pandemic.</p> <p>“One of my favorite lines from somebody at the C.D.C. was ‘You don’t need to count the raindrops to know how hard it’s raining,’” Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in late June at a conference in Aspen, Colo. “So we can tell by the half a million to a million P.C.R.s we’re doing every day how we’re doing in areas around the country.”</p> <p>The C.D.C.’s monitoring of community risk levels shows that in its latest update, 33 percent of the American population lived in a high-risk county, in most regions outside the Northeast. In May, the map had been flipped, with the Northeast comprising most of the high-risk counties. The C.D.C. recommends wearing a mask indoors in public under such a designation.</p> <p>In most of the Northeast, cases have decreased continuously throughout June, according to a New York Times database. In the South, many states have seen cases double or triple over the same time. As of Sunday, more than 113,000 new coronavirus cases are being reported each day in the United States, according to the Times.</p> <p>“That’s not really a reflection of the total amount of virus circulating in the communities,” said Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health. He said that his “back of the envelope” estimate was about one million cases per day.</p> <p>As states report less frequently, changes in the trajectory of the virus are slower to reveal themselves. Nearly every state reported the number of new coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths for five days a week or more in 2020 and 2021, but 23 states now release new data only once a week, according to Times tracking.</p>

California, which once updated its cumulative case and death figures every weekday, now does so only twice weekly. In Florida, case and death data are released just once every two weeks. Just last week, many more public testing sites closed in [Alaska](#), [Colorado](#) and [Rhode Island](#); Iowa is [shutting](#) many sites by the end of next week.

Recent virus figures have hiccuped around holidays like Memorial Day and Juneteenth, during which many states often pause reporting and then restart tracking afterward, a trend that is sure to continue this week, after the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

“Following the daily test count is less instructive than it was,” Dr. Adalja said, citing the close link between cases and hospitalizations in the past. Today’s numbers should not be treated like checking a sports team’s daily standings or scores, he added.

“I think testing is taking a different role,” he said. “Even when testing was at a different point, it has always been an underestimate.”

To get a localized look at how the virus is faring, Dr. Adjala said that he has come to rely on hospitalizations as a percentage of its capacity. He also checks the C.D.C.’s [community levels tracker](#), which includes new hospital admissions and how many beds are used. He urges a shifting focus to severe disease, rather than tracking the “booms and busts of cases.”

Hospitalizations have increased modestly throughout June, though they remain low. Just over 33,000 people are in American hospitals with the coronavirus on an average day, and fewer than 4,000 are in intensive care. Reports of new deaths remain below 400 a day, down from the country’s daily death toll peak of more than 3,300 deaths in January 2021.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Epidemic: police suicides as top cop killer
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/4/biden-silent-increase-police-suicides-while-advoca/
GIST	<p>Suicide has quietly become an epidemic among the nation’s police, ranking as the No. 1 cause of officer deaths this year. Frustrated police advocates and mental health experts warn that President Biden has not only ignored the crisis but also exacerbated it with anti-police rhetoric.</p> <p>Once a loyal ally to law enforcement during his more than 30 years in the Senate, Mr. Biden has tread a fine line when it comes to policing. He has pushed back against the left’s defund-the-police movement but has made few public comments supporting the police, fearful of crossing the Democratic Party’s progressive base and Black voters.</p> <p>“The administration is not addressing police suicides, but in many ways, they are contributing to the stress, uncertainty and mental health issues that a lot of American law enforcement officers feel,” said Betsy Brantner Smith, a spokeswoman for the National Police Association.</p> <p>As president, Mr. Biden has signed legislation to reduce and prevent suicide among frontline health care workers, launched a military and veteran suicide prevention strategy, and advocated mental health services for transgender teens.</p> <p>But administration officials have remained largely mum on law enforcement suicides outside of mourning the deaths of the four officers who died by suicide after responding to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol.</p> <p>At a May event urging cities to invest more funds in local police, Mr. Biden discussed the need for mental health services for offenders reentering society, but not officers.</p>

A Justice Department spokesperson disputed that the administration has been silent on law enforcement suicides, saying Attorney General Merrick Garland addressed the issue at the International Association of Chiefs of Police symposium in March.

During his remarks, Mr. Garland noted that the Justice Department's COPS Office this year will issue \$7 million in grants to prevent suicide and expand mental health services for law enforcement. However, most of the money had been allocated under the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act, a 2018 measure signed into law by then-President Trump.

The spokesperson said the department has not increased the level of funding for fiscal 2023, but it has expanded the training and technical assistance it provides to law enforcement for mental wellness. This year the department added a consolidated list of officer safety and wellness resources to its website.

Mr. Garland also touted a \$2 million grant to convene a national consortium on preventing law enforcement suicides. Those funds were approved by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance in 2019.

"If you acknowledge there is a problem, you have to do something, so I think there is a hesitation to acknowledge there is a problem in this culture of bashing police," said Cherylynn Lee, a police psychologist. "How can you be outspoken about officers being malicious and have a parallel narrative about how they stand up for good and lose a lot on their mission to protect us?"

This year, 64 law enforcement officers in the United States have died by suicide — an average of more than 10 per month — according to Blue H.E.L.P., a nonprofit that keeps such statistics.

Experts say the number is likely higher. Blue H.E.L.P.'s data is based on reports from local police departments. Those departments are hesitant to provide accurate numbers because of the stigma attached to suicide and it isn't considered a line-of-duty death so families of officers who took their own lives can't get benefits.

The 64 reported suicides account for 32% of the 197 officer deaths this year, higher than any category of line-of-duty deaths.

This year 34 officers have been killed by gunfire, most of them while making an arrest, 58 officers died of COVID-19, and another 30 died in traffic incidents.

In 2021, suicide accounted for about 20% of all known police officer deaths.

The rise in officer suicides comes as the national suicide rate declined by 3% in 2021, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mental health advocates say the suicide surge stems from the shame and stigma associated with seeking help in a profession that prides itself on mental and physical toughness, coupled with the growing stress of being a cop amid the anti-police climate in America.

"I've been involved in law enforcement since 1976 and this is the worst I've seen it," Ms. Brantner Smith said.

There is plenty the Biden administration can do to curb law enforcement suicides, according to experts.

The first thing, they said, would be to knock off the comments critical of law enforcement.

In a statement meant to honor officers during Police Week last year, Mr. Biden bashed officers for creating "a deep sense of distrust" between law enforcement and communities of color.

“This year, we also recognize that in many of our communities, especially Black and brown communities, there is a deep sense of distrust towards law enforcement; a distrust that has been exacerbated by the recent deaths of several Black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement,” said the statement that was meant to recognize officers who had fallen in the line of duty.

Mr. Biden vowed last year that two U.S. Border Patrol agents falsely accused of “whipping” Haitian migrants at the border “will pay” for their actions, but they were later cleared of any criminal wrongdoing.

“The biggest thing the Biden administration could do is apologize to the profession for some of the outrageous statements Joe Biden has made since the election,” Ms. Brantner Smith said. “American law enforcement feels that not only does the administration not have our back, but we are actively in the crosshairs and that wears on the mental health of the men and women on the streets trying to do their job.”

Mr. Biden also could host a day honoring law enforcement, or an event highlighting the need for officer mental health services. The White House previously announced several mental health initiatives with much fanfare, including a plan to reduce military veteran suicides.

Experts also called for an increase in funding for mental health services for law enforcement, calling for boosting Justice Department grants available to local departments for counseling and other treatment services.

Police advocates said the grants provided under the 2018 legislation are woefully insufficient and need to be supplemented with funds from the federal government. The grants available under the COPS program and Byrne program are helpful, they said, but cash-strapped departments are spending the funds on critical needs such as replacing damaged vehicles and upgrading holding cells, leaving only a few dollars left for mental health services.

Currently, there is no legislation pending in Congress that would increase federal funding for law enforcement mental health services. While some have blamed the Biden administration, critics note that Republicans have not introduced legislation to improve police access to mental health services.

“The resources that exist are helpful but they are not enough,” said Ms. Lee, the police psychologist. “It is a political danger zone to be pro-police.”

She called for legislation that would mandate police officers have an annual session with a therapist and require officers involved in critical incidents to attend a debrief with officials and counselors. Congress can implement such rules only for federal officers, but local departments usually follow suit.

Currently, only one bill in Congress addresses the higher suicide rates for first responders. The Public Safety Officer Support Act would enable families of officers who died by suicide to be eligible for benefits.

The bill, co-sponsored by Sens. Tammy Duckworth, Illinois Democrat, and John Cornyn, Texas Republican, cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee. It will now move to the full floor for the vote.

An aide to Mr. Cornyn said the president could have done more to help the bill advance more swiftly.

“After their disastrous defund-the-police agenda backfired, the Biden administration continues to find new ways to demonize and neglect our brave law enforcement,” the aide said.

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HEADLINE	07/04 NKorea to build up defense capabilities
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/4/n-korea-says-it-will-build-defenses-response-rapid/

GIST	<p>North Korea on Sunday blamed the U.S., Japan and South Korea for the “rapid aggravation of the security environment of the Korean peninsula,” and said it will quickly build up its defensive capabilities in response.</p> <p>The sharp words from the North Korean Foreign Ministry come amid growing fears that Pyongyang is poised to conduct its first nuclear-weapons test since 2017. Such a move would spark a major escalation of tensions on the peninsula and would present the Biden administration with a significant foreign policy crisis at a time when the West is largely focused on the grueling Russia-Ukraine war.</p> <p>The Russia-Ukraine conflict was at the top of the agenda last week when NATO members met for a high-stakes summit in Madrid. But President Biden also met with the leaders of South Korea and Japan on the sidelines of that summit.</p> <p>South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol’s attendance at the event as an “observer” marked the first time a South Korean leader had attended a NATO summit, along with leaders from Japan, Australia and New Zealand.</p> <p>The meeting of American, Japanese and South Korean leaders sparked an angry response from both North Korea and China. Beijing accused NATO of seeking to extend its military influence into Asia to contain China’s rise, while Pyongyang alleged that the U.S. and its allies are preparing for war with North Korea.</p> <p>“The prevailing situation more urgently calls for building up the country’s defense to actively cope with the rapid aggravation of the security environment of the Korean peninsula and the rest of the world,” the North Korean Foreign Ministry said.</p> <p>“The chief executives of the U.S., Japan and South Korea put their heads together for confrontation with and discussed the dangerous joint military countermeasures against it including the launch of tripartite joint military exercises,” the ministry said in its statement.</p> <p>Pyongyang often criticizes U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises, which are routinely held on the peninsula. U.S. and South Korean officials have repeatedly said the drills are defensive in nature and by no means preparation for an attack on North Korea.</p> <p>Mr. Yoon, who took office less than two months ago, has spoken of intensifying military ties with Washington in the face of an increasingly hostile North Korea, but has also taken care not to incite China, Seoul’s biggest trading partner.</p> <p>“Regarding the trilateral meeting or the NATO summit, it is not about excluding a certain country,” Mr. Yoon told reporters aboard his presidential jet returning home to South Korea last week, according to the Korea Times. “Whenever we are dealing with domestic issues or international agendas, we should pursue a common value and protect rules that everyone should follow.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Day 131 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/04/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-131-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainian forces have raised the country’s flag on Snake Island, a strategic and symbolic outpost in the Black Sea that Russian troops retreated from last week after months of heavy bombardment. “The military operation has been concluded, and ... the territory, Snake Island, has been returned to the jurisdiction of Ukraine,” Natalia Humeniuk, spokesperson for Ukraine’s southern military command, told reporters. Ukraine has considered control of the island as a critical step in loosening Moscow’s blockade on its southern ports. • Leaders from dozens of countries, international organisations and the private sector gathered in Switzerland today to hash out a ‘Marshall plan’ to rebuild war-ravaged Ukraine. Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who took part virtually, earlier

warned that the work ahead in the areas that have been liberated alone was “really colossal”. “And we will have to free over 2,000 villages and towns in the east and south of Ukraine,” he said.

- **Ukraine’s prime minister Denys Shmygal has put a price tag on the recovery of his country at \$750bn (£620bn).** He said the Ukrainian government believed a key source of funding for the recovery plan should be assets confiscated from Russian oligarchs, and that there had been more than \$100bn of direct damage to infrastructure from Russia’s invasion so far.
- **Ukrainian forces on Sunday [retreated from Lysychansk](#) as Russia claims it is now in control of Ukraine’s eastern Luhansk region.** The Russian defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, said Moscow’s forces had established “full control” over Lysychansk and several nearby settlements. Ukraine’s military command confirmed that its troops had been forced to pull back from the city, saying there would otherwise be “fatal consequences”. Lysychansk was the last Ukrainian-controlled city in the Luhansk region.
- **Zelenskiy vowed to regain Lysychansk with the help of long-range western weapons.** “We will return thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons. Ukraine does not give anything up,” he said in an evening address.
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin has congratulated Russian troops on “liberating” the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk.** In a televised meeting with defence minister **Sergei Shoigu** on Monday, Putin congratulated Russian forces on their “victories in the Luhansk direction”. Reuters reports he said those who participated in the combat should “absolutely rest and recover their military preparedness”, while other units continue fighting in other areas.
- **Russia will shift the main focus of its war in Ukraine to trying to seize all of the Donetsk region after capturing neighbouring Luhansk,** the Luhansk region’s governor **Serhai Haidai** has said. He claimed about 8,000 civilians remain in occupied Sievierodonetsk and about 10,000 in newly occupied Lysychansk.
- Russian forces hit a secondary school in the **Kharkiv** district at 4am Monday morning, according to a report from **Oleh Synyehubov**, governor of the region. There were no reported casualties. He also said three people were killed and six injured in an attack on the village of Bezruky in his region.
- The self-proclaimed **Donetsk People’s Republic** has claimed that in the last 24 hours Ukrainian forces have shelled 15 of the 240 settlements they say they control. They claim that “five people were killed and another 20 civilians were injured.”
- **The eastern Ukrainian city of Sloviansk in the Donetsk region was hit by powerful shelling from multiple rocket launchers on Sunday, killing six people and injuring 20 others,** the city’s mayor Vadim Lyakh said. In the post-2014 regional capital of Kramatorsk, a missile destroyed a hotel, according to its mayor Oleksandr Goncharenko. [He said](#) three rockets hit the town on Sunday and that there were no reported victims so far.
- **At least three people were killed and dozens of residential buildings damaged in the Russian city of Belgorod** near the Ukrainian border on Sunday, the region’s governor said. Vyacheslav Gladkov said at least 11 apartment buildings and 39 private residential houses were damaged, including five houses destroyed.
- **Turkey** has halted a Russian-flagged cargo ship off its Black Sea coast and is investigating a Ukrainian claim that it was carrying stolen grain, a senior Turkish official said.
- **Putin** will not congratulate his US counterpart **Joe Biden** on Monday’s US independence day celebrations because of Washington’s “unfriendly” actions towards Moscow, the Kremlin has said.
- **Ukraine** has renewed its invitation for **Pope Francis** to visit the country and urged the pontiff to continue praying for the Ukrainian people, a foreign ministry spokesperson said.
- The **Russian cosmonauts** who were [lauded at the outset of the war on Ukraine](#) in February for appearing to show their support for their invaded neighbours with yellow and blue spacesuits, have been pictured on the International Space Station (ISS) holding the flags of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic, alongside a message celebrating what Russian space agency Roscosmos termed the “liberation” of Luhansk.
- **Europe faces a rising risk of recession because of rising oil and gas prices amid concerns that Russia could turn off supplies completely, economists have said.** Europe’s economy will be hit by a variety of factors including falling demand in the US – its biggest export market – the

	<p>continued fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and related increases in food and energy prices, according to Nomura, a Japanese investment bank with significant operations in London.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia will send more than \$100m in new aid to Ukraine including military equipment, as well as levelling sanctions on 16 new Russian officials, after prime minister Anthony Albanese's secret trip to Kyiv. Albanese visited Bucha, Hostomel and Irpın, three towns in the Kyiv region where evidence of mass killings and torture was uncovered after the withdrawal of Russian forces. • Britain will host a 2023 recovery conference to help Ukraine rebuild from the damage caused by Russia's invasion. The Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC2022) will begin on Monday in Lugano, Switzerland, to discuss how to rebuild Ukraine, bringing together a Ukrainian delegation with representatives of other countries, international organisations and civil society, the UK Foreign Office said. • The UK may follow the example of Canada and seize the assets of Russians in Britain in order to give them to Ukraine. Foreign secretary, Liz Truss, told MPs she was supportive of the idea that the government could seize frozen Russian assets in the UK and redistribute them to victims of Russia's war in Ukraine. • A new New York Times investigation has revealed that nazism references spiked to record-high levels the day Russia invaded Ukraine. The outlet surveyed eight million articles about Ukraine collected from over 8,000 Russian websites since 2014, and found that since 2014, references to nazism were "relatively flat for eight years and then spiked to unprecedented levels on 24 February" of this year. • The president of Belarus and Vladimir Putin's closest ally has said his ex-Soviet state stands fully behind Russia, adding that the country's "have practically a unified army". Alexander Lukashenko said he had thrown his weight behind Putin's campaign against Ukraine "from the very first day" in late February. "We are being criticised for being the only country in the world to support Russia in its fight against nazism," a video on the state BelTA news agency showed Lukashenko telling a gathering. "We will remain together with fraternal Russia." • Turkish customs authorities have detained a Russian cargo ship carrying grain allegedly stolen from Ukraine, the Ukrainian ambassador to the country has said. "We have full cooperation. The ship is currently standing at the entrance to the port, it has been detained by the customs authorities of Turkey," ambassador Vasył Bodnar said on Ukrainian national television.
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HEADLINE	07/05 Day 132 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/05/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-132-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia has declared victory in the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk, a day after Ukrainian forces withdrew from their last remaining stronghold in the province. On Monday, Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, told Putin that "the operation" in Luhansk was complete. The Russian president said the military units "that took part in active hostilities and achieved success, victory" in Luhansk "should rest, increase their combat capabilities". • Luhansk governor, Serhiy Haidai, said the weeks-long battle for Lysychansk had drawn in Russian troops that could have been fighting on other fronts, and had given Ukraine's forces time to build fortifications in the Donetsk region to make it "harder for the Russians there". He also reiterated calls for Ukraine's western allies to provide more arms, saying the country's armed forces would launch a counteroffensive when they had sufficient long-range weapons. • Following Russia's capture of Lysychansk and control of Ukraine's eastern Luhansk region, Ukrainian forces will be able to fall back to a more readily defensible, straightened frontline, according to the UK Ministry of Defence. • Ukraine has laid out a \$750bn (£620bn) 'recovery plan' for its postwar future during the Ukraine Recovery Conference hosted by Switzerland on Monday. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said the common task of the entire democratic world was to map out a physical future for Ukraine in the event it survives as a western-facing nation after the Russian invasion.

- **Ukraine's prime minister, Denys Shmyhal, said a key source of funding for the recovery plan should be assets confiscated from Russian oligarchs.** Ukraine's recovery plan so far has three phases: a first focused on fixing things that matter for people's daily lives, such as water supply, which is ongoing; a second "fast recovery" component that will be launched as soon as fighting ends, including temporary housing, hospital and school projects; and a third that aims to transform the country over the longer term.
- **Ukrainian forces are [set to raise the country's flag on Snake Island](#),** a strategic and symbolic outpost in the Black Sea that Russian troops retreated from last week after months of heavy bombardment. Ukraine's military earlier stated that the national flag had been returned to the island shortly before 11pm on Monday. However, Natalia Humeniuk, spokesperson for Ukraine's southern military command, later confirmed in an interview with CNN: "The flag was delivered to the island by helicopter. It will wait for the arrival of the troops, then it will wave."
- **A British citizen who has been sentenced to death by a Russian proxy court in eastern Ukraine has [launched an appeal](#) against the verdict.** Aiden Aslin, 28, a British-Ukrainian former care worker from Nottinghamshire who was a Ukrainian marine, was captured by Russian forces in the besieged city of Mariupol in April.
- Russia is reportedly planning to launch a railway link between the **Rostov** region and the areas of **Donetsk** and **Luhansk** which it occupies in eastern Ukraine.
- Russian defence minister **Sergei Shoigu** has claimed that Russia has made two humanitarian corridor in the Black and Azov Seas to facilitate the export of grain.
- **Yevgeny Balitsky**, head of the Russian-imposed administration of the occupied **Zaporizhzhia** region of Ukraine, has said the region plans to sell Ukraine's grain to the Middle East. The main countries involved in the deal were **Iraq, Iran** and **Saudi Arabia**.
- Ukraine's foreign minister **Dmytro Kuleba** has urged the international community to reduce Russian access to maritime transport, saying "Russia's export-oriented economy relies heavily on maritime transportation provided by foreign fleets. I urge partners: restrict Russia's access to their services and deplete Putin's war machine."
- **The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, has said alternative routes to retrieve grain stuck in Ukraine would need to be looked at,** including through Europe's Danube River, if it cannot be moved via the Bosphorus strait in Turkey. "The Turks are absolutely indispensable to solving this. They're doing their very best ... We will increasingly have to look at alternative means of moving that grain from Ukraine if we cannot use the sea route, if you can't use the Bosphorus," he told parliament on Monday.
- **Turkey has halted a Russian-flagged cargo ship off its Black Sea coast** and is investigating a Ukrainian claim that it was carrying stolen grain, a senior Turkish official said on Monday.
- **Ukraine is holding talks with Turkey and the United Nations to secure guarantees for grain exports from Ukrainian ports, Zelenskiy said.** "Talks are in fact going on now with Turkey and the UN [and] our representatives who are responsible for the security of the grain that leaves our ports," Ukraine's president told a news conference alongside the Swedish prime minister, Magdalena Andersson.
- **Ukraine has renewed its invitation for Pope Francis to visit the country** and urged the pontiff to continue praying for the Ukrainian people, a foreign ministry spokesperson said.
- The Russian foreign minister, **Sergei Lavrov**, will fly to Hanoi today for a two-day visit to Vietnam before heading to a G20 meeting later this week in Indonesia.
- **Western envoys in China have criticised Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, with the US ambassador saying China should not spread Russian "propaganda",** during an unusual public forum in a country that has declined to condemn Moscow's attack.
- **Russian missiles hit a secondary school in the Kharkiv district at 4am on Monday,** according to a report from Oleh Synyehubov, governor of the region.
- **Britain is proposing a new law that will require social media companies to proactively tackle disinformation posted by foreign states such as [Russia](#).** The law would tackle fake accounts on platforms such as Meta's Facebook and Twitter that were set up on behalf of foreign states to influence elections or court proceedings, the government said in an announcement on Monday.

HEADLINE	07/05 Villagers massacred in western Ethiopia
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/05/villagers-massacred-western-ethiopia-says-state-appointed-body
GIST	<p>An unknown number of villagers have been killed in an ethnically motivated massacre in western Ethiopia, the country's state-appointed rights body said, as federal forces attempt to stabilise the area following a mass killing in mid-June.</p> <p>Oromiya region, where the Amhara are a minority ethnic group, has experienced spasms of violence for many years, rooted in grievances about political marginalisation and neglect by the central government.</p> <p>The killings took place on Monday in two villages in Kellem Wollega, about 250 miles (400km) west of the capital, Addis Ababa, the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said.</p> <p>It blamed the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), a banned splinter group of an opposition party, for the killings. The OLA denied the accusation and said paramilitary groups were responsible.</p> <p>Reuters was not immediately able to verify the claims of either side.</p> <p>Ethiopia's prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, blamed the OLA for the attacks, which he also called a "massacre".</p> <p>The OLA spokesperson, Odaa Tarbii, rejected the accusations, saying government-allied militias were responsible for the slaughter, while federal troops recently deployed in the area did nothing to stop it. "The prime minister's accusation is an attempt by the regime to deflect from the fact that it is struggling to maintain order in its own forces," he told Reuters.</p> <p>Ethiopia's government spokesperson, Legesse Tulu, said the OLA was attempting to shift blame on to the government, calling it a tactic "any terrorist group uses to hide their evil works". He did not provide any details on casualties.</p> <p>Oromiya's regional administration spokesperson did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The US-based Amhara Association of America (AAA) tweeted it was "gravely concerned over reports of yet another massacre against Amharas" in the Oromia region.</p> <p>It said in a message to AFP that the attack targeted members of the ethnic Amhara group in Mender 20 (Village 20) in the Hawa Gelan district of Qellem Wollega. "One of our investigators did talk to three eyewitnesses ... hiding in a forest nearby," the AAA said, adding that the attack began at 6am local time (0400 BST) and was still going on when he spoke to the witnesses around noon.</p> <p>About 340 people were killed in the same region last month, Abiy's spokesperson has said, amid accusations of blame by the government and the OLA.</p> <p>The EHRC called for an immediate stabilisation of the area.</p> <p>"The continued insecurity in the area and what appears to be the ethnically targeted killing of residents must be put to a stop immediately," Daniel Bekele, the head of the EHRC, said in a statement late on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 NKorea dam water release into south
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/05/north-korea-dam-water-release-forces-south-koreans-near-border-to-evacuate
GIST	North Korea appears to have released water from a dam near its border with South Korea, prompting vacationers in the neighbouring country to evacuate over rising water levels on the Imjin River.

	<p>The water level at a bridge across the river in the South's border county of Yeoncheon surpassed 1 metre on Monday afternoon, requiring visitors on the riverbank to evacuate.</p> <p>"North Korea appears to have released water from its Hwanggang dam," an official at South Korea's unification ministry handling inter-Korean affairs said.</p> <p>The Yeoncheon county said it sent alarm messages to nearby residents and issued warnings to move to a safe area.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear how many people had to leave after the suspected water release.</p> <p>"The water level is now decreasing after hovering over 1.6 metres," a Yeoncheon county official said.</p> <p>North Korea has been stepping up efforts to prevent flood damage from recent heavy rains.</p> <p>South Korea has repeatedly urged the North to give notice before releasing water from the dam, as the river flows through Yeoncheon, but Pyongyang has remained unresponsive.</p> <p>Release of water from the dam in 2009 resulted in flooding downstream that killed six South Koreans.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Court ruling puts new focus states' power
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/In-light-of-EPA-court-ruling-new-focus-on-17283319.php
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court limited the power of the federal government to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants. But its ruling didn't touch the power of the states.</p> <p>That's putting a renewed focus on efforts across the country to limit the reliance on power plants that spew planet-warming emissions into the air. While Democratic states have taken the lead on the most aggressive climate policy in recent years, some Republican-led states are also helping shift the U.S. power grid toward cleaner sources of energy.</p> <p>"This ruling makes clear that the actions of governors and state legislatures are more important than ever before. Thankfully, state authority to curb greenhouse gas emissions has not changed," Democratic Govs. Jay Inslee of Washington, Kathy Hochul of New York and Gavin Newsom of California said in a statement after the ruling. The three are co-chairs of the U.S. Climate Alliance, a group of 24 states committed to climate action.</p> <p>States can cut emissions from power plants in a handful of direct and indirect ways. Chief among them are carbon markets that aim to lower emissions from large, polluting facilities over time and rules that require utilities to buy certain amounts of energy from renewable or non-carbon sources.</p> <p>California, New York and Washington are all known for setting some of the nation's most ambitious climate goals. All three have committed to getting 100% of their electric power from non-carbon sources by 2040 or 2045. But they're not alone. Eighteen states have set 100% clean energy goals, according to the U.S. Climate Alliance.</p> <p>Most of the states in the alliance are led by Democrats, but a few including Vermont, Massachusetts and Maryland have Republican governors. Together the states account for 42% of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>So-called renewable portfolio standards don't directly regulate emissions. But they have a similar effect by encouraging utilities not to purchase power from carbon-emitting sources like coal-fired plants. They also</p>

encourage a ramp-up of solar, wind and other types of renewable power so that utilities will have enough places to buy energy as the rules tighten.

More than a dozen U.S. states also participate in some type of carbon market that more directly regulates emissions from power plants. Such markets set caps on the amount of allowable emissions, and polluters must buy allowances equal to what they want to emit.

The allowable emissions cap goes down over time, causing prices for the emissions allowances to go up. The goal is to encourage power plants and other polluters to reduce their emissions over time in a way that's economically optimal for them and their customers.

California runs a cap-and-trade program that's a key part of the state's path to lowering emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, though some critics question whether it can achieve that goal. On the East Coast, 11 states have partnered to create the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a similar market-based program designed to lower emissions.

"If the EPA doesn't have this authority, then that certainly doesn't preempt states from going ahead," said Cary Coglianese, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania focused on regulation.

But, he noted, the problem is that climate change is a global problem and mixed state efforts aren't going to be enough to make real progress.

Indeed, the states that produce the most coal and natural gas are mostly led by Republicans, and they have a mixed record on advancing policies that support clean energy.

West Virginia, a heavy coal-producing state, brought the challenge against the EPA. In 2020, the state got 88% of its electricity from coal, with renewables like hydropower and wind accounting for just 6%. The Legislature in 2015 repealed a state law that required a certain amount of power to come from renewable or alternative sources.

Wyoming, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Illinois and North Dakota produced the most coal among states in 2020, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Texas, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Oklahoma and West Virginia are the top producers of natural gas.

Texas, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma are among states that have set modest renewable goals for electric utilities, but they haven't been updated in recent years to set stricter goals for the future. Still, Texas produces the most wind energy in the nation by far and Oklahoma comes in third, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. That's largely driven by market forces and unlikely to change in light of the EPA's ruling.

Dan Farber, faculty director of the Center for Law, Energy & the Environment at the University of California, Berkeley, said market forces that are making coal a less economically viable energy source and lowering the cost of wind and solar will likely continue to shape states' energy choices regardless of political ideology.

"If you talk about climate change there are a lot of places where that conversation is going to go nowhere," he said. "But if you talk about renewable energy and modernizing the energy system, there are a lot of red states where that has some traction."

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HEADLINE	07/04 Flight delays, cancellations hamper travel
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/04/us/july-4#flight-delays-cancellations
GIST	Nearly seven million travelers flooded U.S. airports on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with a total of 13 million air travelers to, from or within the United States expected to have passed through by the end of this Fourth of July weekend.

For many of those passengers, however, travel plans were upended because of [flight delays and cancellations](#) caused by a boom in travel demand coupled with widespread staffing shortages. From Friday through Sunday, airlines that fly within, into, or out of the United States canceled more than 1,400 flights, according to [FlightAware](#), a flight-tracking website, stranding and angering some passengers headed for long-awaited summer vacations. In addition, more than 14,000 U.S. flights were delayed this holiday weekend, according to the site's data.

The experience has been frustrating for some passengers on U.S. carriers. On Saturday, 1,048 — or 29 percent — of Southwest Airlines flights were delayed, as were 28 percent of American Airlines flights, according to FlightAware. United Airlines and Delta Air Lines had similar problems, with 21 percent and 19 percent of their flights delayed. On Sunday, the middle of the holiday weekend, travelers seemed to be getting a respite from the worst of the troubles, with roughly three-quarters of the delays and half as many cancellations as the day before.

As of noon Eastern time on Monday, there were more than 1,000 delays and about 180 cancellations at U.S. airports.

In a typical month, about 20 percent of flights are delayed or canceled, according to [Robert W. Mann Jr.](#), a former airline executive who now runs the airline consultancy R.W. Mann & Company. But this holiday weekend, he said, it was about 30 percent. "It's a little bit worse than usual," he said.

As airlines face a pilot shortage, bad weather conditions and air traffic control delays, some seemed to struggle to handle passenger volume that approached or in some cases exceeded prepandemic levels. On Friday, the Transportation Safety Administration screened more passengers — [2.49 million people](#) — than on any other day this year. That surpassed the 2.18 million travelers screened on July 1, 2019, before the pandemic.

Still, travel to and from airports in the United States seemed to be going better than in many other parts of the world. On Sunday, airlines had delayed about half of all flights departing from Toronto Pearson International Airport, Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris and Frankfurt Airport, while about 40 percent of flights from London Heathrow were delayed.

On Monday, Australian airports were hit hard, with nearly 60 percent of departing flights from Sydney Airport delayed, while airports in Brisbane and Melbourne did not fare much better. SAS, the Scandinavian airline, [said on Monday](#) that its pilots' union had called a strike over pay, which would lead to the cancellation of 50 percent of its flights, affecting about 30,000 passengers daily. The money-losing carrier, which serves as the national airline of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, called the move "devastating."

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HEADLINE	07/02 Covid levels 'high' across most of Oregon
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/covid-levels-high-across-most-of-oregon-federal-guidelines-urge-masks-indoors/
GIST	<p>Most Oregonians should wear masks to protect themselves and others from the coronavirus, according to federal health guidance, with 24 counties now seeing "high" levels of COVID-19, as determined by occupied hospital beds, admissions and total cases.</p> <p>At that risk level, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges everyone to wear masks in indoor public places and get tested for COVID-19 if they experience symptoms. Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties are among those the CDC says have high levels of COVID-19.</p> <p>Oregon's other 12 counties are seeing medium community levels of COVID-19, according the CDC. The Oregon Health Authority has previously recommended masks be worn in indoor public places in counties at that risk level, too.</p>

	<p>The Oregon Health Authority recommends people in the high-level counties wear masks regardless of vaccination status, but does not plan to reinstate a public indoor mask mandate, a spokesperson for the agency said in an email.</p> <p>The health authority urged Oregonians anticipating the holiday weekend to remember the virus is widespread.</p> <p>“Consider spending more time outside with friends and family over indoor activities,” the Oregon Health Authority said in a tweet Thursday evening. “If you’re indoors, wearing the highest quality mask you can find offers extra protection.”</p> <p>Identified infections are averaging about 1,600 new cases a day. Nearly 420 people were hospitalized with COVID-19 as of Thursday, and more than 14% of all reported COVID-19 tests in Oregon reported that day came back positive, according to state data.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 National Space Intelligence Center
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/intelligence/dni-haines-speaks-at-the-activation-of-the-national-space-intelligence-center/
GIST	<p>The Space Force activated the National Space Intelligence Center which will be led by its newest unit Space Delta 18, during a ceremony on June 24 at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.</p> <p>Space Delta 18 will be responsible for delivering critical intelligence on threat systems, foreign intentions, and activities in the space domain.</p> <p>Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines spoke at the event and stressed the importance of Space Force Intelligence for our national security.</p> <p>“As the Service Intelligence Center for the U.S. Space Force, NSIC will be well positioned to support U.S. and allied space decision makers at an absolutely critical moment in the history of space development,” said Haines. “In the years ahead, the environment will only become more contested. And as we move forward, NSIC will be relied upon to produce and analyze scientific and technical intelligence related to space for the entire nation.”</p> <p>Space Delta 18 is named in honor of the Space Force officially becoming the 18 member of the U.S. Intelligence Community in January 2021.</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Leah Lauderback, the U.S. Air Force Director of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, has been leading the charge to create NSIC since 2021.</p> <p>In April of 2021, Lauderback said in an interview with Signal Magazine, “the National Space Intelligence Center will be the Nation’s center of excellence for intelligence of foreign space and counterspace capabilities and intent.”</p> <p>At the ceremony, Lauderback spoke on how vital NSIC will be to combatant commands, the greater Department of Defense, and the Intelligence Community.</p> <p>Col. Marqus D. Randall will hold the reins as the new commander of Space Delta 18. He congratulated the men and women that have made the creation of NSIC possible.</p> <p>“Exhale, breath now, take a bow, job well done,” said Randall.</p>

	<p>In her remarks, DNI Haines recognized the possible threats to the space domain, including those posed by China and Russia as they develop, test, and field counterspace weapons, but said she is confident that NSIC is well placed to meet those challenges head on.</p> <p>“If NSIC does its job well, as I know they will under Colonel Randall’s gifted leadership, we and our allies will make better decisions about space,” said Haines. “I know the women and men of Space Force are up to the challenge, with NSIC leading the way.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Bellevue PD adapts safety approach 4th July
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/bellevue/bellevue-police-adapt-safety-approach-after-mass-shooting/281-eb8a0bb1-86f6-43be-8970-88bce9d1902c
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — After a pandemic hiatus, the Bellevue Family 4th event returned Monday evening. Bellevue Police said it is constantly preparing and adapting its public safety response for events like the 4th of July, and a mass shooting in Illinois just hours before this year's event had the department adjusting on the fly.</p> <p>"It was the worst news you could get the morning of a large event like this. We immediately went into an assessment of what we had in place and whether we needed to make some changes and adjustments, which we did," said Bellevue Police Major Dave Sanabria.</p> <p>Monday morning in Highland Park, Ill., a gunman shot and killed six people. At least 30 other people were injured. The gunman shot from the top of a building onto the city's 4th of July Parade.</p> <p>Sanabria did not highlight specific changes for the Bellevue Family 4th citing safety, but said the department plans for the worst. The department trains on certain situations, anticipates scenarios and looks at what it can learn from previous tragedies.</p> <p>For example, Bellevue Downtown Park was surrounded by heavy, orange barricades Monday night. Sanabria said those barricades were added in response to a deadly event at a Waukesha, Wis. parade in November 2021. Six people were killed and more than 60 injured when a person drove through a holiday parade.</p> <p>"We've tried to address some of the areas where people could take a vehicle and gain access to the park," said Sanabria.</p> <p>While people were out celebrating the 4th of July in Bellevue, many did with a heavy heart, and shared gratitude for the authorities who plan for whatever might happen.</p> <p>Sanabria said while the department's plans adapt, the need for a community to look out for one another doesn't change.</p> <p>"Obviously, there no guarantees in life, but I don't encourage people to live in fear. You can remain vigilant, trust your own internal feelings and if you see something say something," said Sanabria.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 US at-risk losing control of monkeypox
SOURCE	https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3544371-advocates-warn-us-at-risk-of-losing-control-on-monkeypox/
GIST	<p>Infectious disease experts and public health advocates are warning that the Biden administration has been too slow to respond to the monkeypox outbreak and that the U.S. is at risk of losing control of the disease.</p> <p>The response to monkeypox is mirroring the worst parts of the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, they say, with severely limited testing and a sluggish rollout of vaccines leading to a virus that’s spreading undetected.</p>

“Where we have lagged is streamlining testing, making vaccines available, streamlining access to the best therapeutics. All three areas have been bureaucratic and slow, and that means we haven’t contained this outbreak,” said David Harvey, executive director of the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSDD).

Unlike COVID-19, monkeypox is not a novel virus, and the strategies to reduce the spread are well known. Biden administration officials said they are confident in their approach.

“We as a global community have known about it for decades. We know how it spreads. We have tests that help identify people who are infected. We have vaccines that are highly effective against it,” White House coronavirus response coordinator Ashish Jha said during a recent briefing.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are 460 cases in 30 states, Puerto Rico and D.C., though experts say that number is almost certainly an undercount, as many people who may be infected don’t yet have access to widespread testing.

The administration is ramping up its response by expanding testing capacity and broadening access to vaccinations, though critics say the efforts may be coming too late.

“We’ve been sort of screaming for a month about how bad the diagnostic situation is for monkeypox. And that really was a clear error, preventable, and it’s very clear that this administration has not learned lessons from early COVID,” said James Krellenstein, co-founder of the HIV treatment advocacy group Prep4All.

Jon Andrus, an adjunct professor of global health at George Washington University’s Milken Institute School of Public Health, said the U.S. is lucky that monkeypox is not as contagious as COVID-19, or as deadly, because the public health system is underfunded and overly fractured.

“I think we’ll continue to repeat these mistakes because that’s been our track record. That’s been our track record. We’ve had, what, more than five or six waves of COVID, and we seem every time to be a little bit caught off guard,” Andrus said. “Stopping transmission requires that we’re all reading from the same page. We all have the same road map.”

The administration expanded testing to commercial labs in late June, so providers will soon be able to order tests directly from the labs where they have established relationships and can jump through fewer hoops.

But it took more than a month for that move to happen, which increased testing capacity from about 8,000 tests a week to 10,000 across the entire system.

Demand is also not evenly spread across the public health laboratory networks; it is concentrated in urban areas such as New York City, leading to backlogs and frustrated patients who wait days for test results.

Biden administration health officials this week touted efforts to expand testing.

“I strongly encourage all health care providers to have a high clinical suspicion for monkeypox among their patients,” CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said during a call with reporters. “Patients presenting with a suspicious rash should be tested.”

Testing for monkeypox is a relatively simple process that involves swabbing a skin lesion. Unlike with COVID-19, the CDC already had a previously developed test, but patients were limited to a narrow set of specific criteria in order to qualify for testing.

“We already had testing available. We already had vaccines available. We should have really been much more aggressive with testing ... and I think this speaks to some of the bureaucracy of both FDA [Food and Drug Administration] and CDC,” said Celine Gounder, an infectious disease specialist and editor-at-large for public health at Kaiser Health News.

“Getting the commercial labs on board they could have done sooner. Getting academic medical centers to do testing, hospital labs to develop their own PCR tests. I mean, that’s not a very difficult thing to do,” Gounder said.

The White House is also working to scale up its vaccination program and announced a plan to immediately send out tens of thousands of doses of Jynneos, the only FDA-approved vaccine specifically for monkeypox.

More than a million doses will be made available throughout the year. The CDC is also broadening the eligibility criteria so individuals with confirmed monkeypox exposures and presumed exposures can be vaccinated, rather than only those who have a confirmed case.

But activists and experts say the administration moved too slowly and that the updated vaccination strategy is not nearly sufficient.

“We believe this outbreak is already out of control. So, we have not contained it. Vaccines are not going to contain it at this point. Because we don’t have enough. Getting them into arms is an expensive and intense process,” said NCSD’s Harvey.

New York City and Washington, D.C., began offering the vaccines to men who have sex with other men or may have been exposed to the virus. But both cities ran through their supplies less than a day after launching their local immunization initiatives. D.C. Health had to shut access about 10 minutes after making shots available.

There are about 56,000 Jynneos doses in the Strategic National Stockpile that will be allocated immediately, officials said, and the administration plans to allocate 296,000 doses over the coming weeks.

The U.S. has tens of millions of doses of the smallpox vaccine ACAM2000, but that shot has more dangerous and severe side effects.

According to a spokesman for Jynneos’s Denmark-based manufacturer Bavarian Nordic, 300,000 doses have already been delivered or will be arriving over the next few days.

An additional 1.1 million filled doses are still being inspected by the FDA, which should finish in the next couple weeks.

The government also owns bulk materials totaling as many as 15 million doses, but they are still frozen, and the administration has not told the company how it wants those doses filled.

“American taxpayers spent money buying and manufacturing these doses precisely so they can be used rapidly in the event of an outbreak,” said Krellenstein of Prep4All.

“Here we have an outbreak, and my friends are literally being turned away from being vaccinated because the Biden administration can’t figure out how to get a million doses out of a freezer in Denmark into the United States,” Krellenstein added.

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HEADLINE	07/05 Euro slides 20yr-low, recession fears build
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/05/euro-slides-to-20-year-low-against-the-dollar-as-recession-fears-build.html
GIST	The euro fell to its lowest level in two decades on Tuesday, sliding over 1% for the session to hit \$1.0283. It comes as fears of a recession in the euro zone ramp up, as gas prices soar and the Ukraine war shows no signs of abating.

[Euro zone inflation hit a record 8.6% in June](#), prompting the European Central Bank to give markets advance notice of its intention to hike interest rates for the first time in 11 years at its July meeting.

However, growing fears of a recession may limit the central bank's capacity to tighten monetary policy. The [July Sentix Economic Index](#) on Monday showed investor morale across the 19-country euro zone has plunged to its lowest level since May 2020, pointing toward an "inevitable" recession.

Record-high inflation in Europe has been abetted by skyrocketing gas prices over recent months.

Natural gas prices in Europe on Monday extended their relentless rise, climbing to highs not seen since early March as planned strikes in Norway added to market woes about Russian supply cuts. [The front-month gas price](#) at the Dutch TTF hub, a European benchmark for natural gas trading, was last seen trading up 7.8% to hit 175.5 euros (\$180.8) per megawatt-hour.

All of these factors have converged to hit the euro hard. The currency of the euro zone has lost over 9% of its value against [the dollar](#) since the start of the year.

The dollar's strength continues, meanwhile, as risk-averse investors seek a safe haven, and the U.S. Federal Reserve embarks upon what looks to be an aggressive rate hike regime.

After [raising benchmark interest rates by three-quarters of a percentage point](#) in June, Fed Chair Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank could raise interest rates by a [similar magnitude next month](#).

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HEADLINE	07/04 Survey: 1/3rd can't spell 'independence'
SOURCE	https://www.studyfinds.org/americans-cant-spell-independence/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — Independence Day may be synonymous with summer, but a new survey finds many Americans should go back to school! It turns out one in three people don't know how to spell "independence" — and even fewer know why Americans celebrate on the Fourth of July!</p> <p>Specifically, the poll of 1,030 Americans, commissioned by Lawsuit.org, found over a third spell independence incorrectly. Moreover, researchers add that internet searches for "how to spell independence" skyrocket by 85 percent during the July 4th holiday weekend.</p> <p>The most common way people misspell this important word in the American lexicon is by using an "a" — spelling it "independance."</p> <p>Other common misspellings include independense, independence, indiependence, and independents — which is actually a real word, but there's no such thing as Independents Day.</p> <p>Are you an indepen-dunce?</p> <p>Spelling isn't the only thing giving many people trouble on the Fourth of July. The survey also discovered that plenty of respondents deserve an F in American history.</p> <p>As most elementary school students could tell you, July 4th commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 — signaling the nation's freedom from British rule. However, the poll found two in three young adults in Gen Z don't know who America declared its independence from.</p> <p>In fact, one in three Gen Zers think July 4th celebrates America's independence from the Native Americans!</p> <p>Overall, less than 58 percent of all respondents correctly answered that America gained its freedom from Great Britain. Nearly eight percent said "Europe." Over eight percent said "South America" and more than 12 percent chose "none of the above!"</p>

The embarrassing American trivia doesn't end there. The poll also found plenty of people who [need a refresher course](#) on the American flag.

One in 10 respondents didn't know how many stripes are on the American flag. While red, white, and blue may be easy to remember, the poll finds the average American thinks there are 14 stripes on the flag — instead of the correct answer of 13, which symbolize the original 13 colonies.

So, regardless of how you spell it, Happy independance... independense... (oh, the heck with it) Happy Fourth of July!

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HEADLINE	07/04 Uzbekistan unrest: 18 dead, 243 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/04/asia/uzbekistan-violence-protests-karakalpakstan-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>Eighteen people were killed and 243 wounded during unrest in Uzbekistan's autonomous province of Karakalpakstan last week, Uzbek authorities said on Monday -- the worst bout of violence in the Central Asian nation in 17 years.</p> <p>Security forces detained 516 people during the protests, which broke out over plans to curtail Karakalpakstan's autonomy, but have now released many of them, the National Guard press office told a briefing.</p> <p>On Saturday, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev dropped plans to amend articles of the constitution concerning Karakalpakstan's sovereignty and its right to secede. He also declared a month-long state of emergency in the northwestern province.</p> <p>Official reports said protesters had marched through the provincial capital Nukus last Friday and tried to seize local government buildings.</p> <p>According to the prosecutor general's office, 18 people died "from grave wounds" sustained during the clashes. Russia's RIA news agency quoted the head of the National Guard as saying the toll comprised 14 civilians and four law enforcement officers.</p> <p>Two exiled opposition politicians in contact with people on the ground told Reuters they believed the real figure was much higher. It was not possible to independently establish the death toll.</p> <p>Karakalpakstan -- situated on the shores of the Aral Sea, for decades an environmental disaster site -- is home to the Karakalpaks, an ethnic minority group whose language is distinct from Uzbek, although related.</p> <p>"Karakalpaks are not Uzbeks ... They have their own traditions, culture and law," Aman Sagidullayev, Norway-based leader of the pro-independence Alga Karakalpakstan party, told Reuters, accusing the government of waging a "punitive operation."</p> <p>Muted reaction</p> <p>A group of opposition politicians and activists who call themselves the government of Karakalpakstan in exile published an appeal to Mirziyoyev.</p> <p>They called for the release of arrested demonstrators, the dissolution of the Karakalpak government and new elections, and a review of the actions of law enforcement agencies including "the unjustified and disproportionate use of force that led to human victims, torture and arbitrary detention".</p> <p>They complained of discrimination against their language and the "silencing and distortion" of the region's history.</p>

	<p>Russia, with which ex-Soviet Uzbekistan has close ties, said the matter was Uzbekistan's domestic affair. The Russian Foreign Ministry said it was confident that authorities there would succeed in normalizing the situation, and said issues should be solved by "legal means" rather than rioting.</p> <p>The European Union called for "an open and independent investigation into the violent events in Karakalpakstan."</p> <p>Mirziyoyev's office said he had discussed the matter with EU Council President Charles Michel, and that the unrest had been incited by "criminal elements".</p> <p>An exiled Uzbek opposition politician, Pulat Ahunov, told Reuters that the curfew imposed for the duration of the state of emergency and tight security seemed to have stabilized the situation, but there was still a risk of ethnic clashes.</p> <p>There are an estimated 700,000 Karakalpaks among Uzbekistan's 34 million people, most of them in the autonomous republic. Geographic and linguistic proximity has led many to seek work and sometimes relocate to neighboring Kazakhstan.</p> <p>Some observers believe Tashkent's miscalculated attempt to curtail Karakalpakstan's autonomy -- Mirziyoyev himself has criticised local MPs for not telling him about public opposition to it -- may have been a bid to pre-empt any upsurge in separatism against the background of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>In 2005, Uzbek security forces crushed armed protests in the city of Andizhan, with 173 people killed in the clashes, according to official reports. The government at the time blamed the crisis in Andizhan -- located in the opposite, eastern part of Uzbekistan -- on Islamist extremists.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Ukraine PM: need \$750B for recovery plan
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-needs-750-bln-recovery-plan-prime-minister-says-2022-07-04/
GIST	<p>KYIV, July 4 (Reuters) - Ukraine needs \$750 billion for a three-stage recovery plan in the wake of Russia's invasion, its prime minister said on Monday.</p> <p>Denys Shmygal also told the Ukraine Recovery Conference hosted by Switzerland that there had been over \$100 billion of direct damage to Ukrainian infrastructure from Russia's invasion.</p> <p>"Today, the direct infrastructure losses of Ukraine stand at over \$100 billion," he said. "Who will pay for the renewal plan, which is already being valued at \$750 billion?"</p> <p>Shmygal added that the Ukrainian government believed that a key source of funding for the recovery plan should be assets confiscated from Russian oligarchs.</p> <p>He said Ukraine's recovery plan had three phases: A first focused on fixing things that matter for people's daily lives like water supply which is ongoing, a "fast recovery" component that will be launched as soon as fighting ends including temporary housing, hospital and school projects, and one that aims to transform the country over the longer term.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Uneasy Americans try to celebrate July 4th
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-government-and-politics-united-states-3afaab2efa613b5218dbc19ea4bd598d
GIST	<p>A shooting that left at least six people dead at an Independence Day parade in a Chicago suburb rattled Monday's celebrations across the U.S. and further rocked a country already awash in turmoil over high court rulings on abortion and guns as well as hearings on the Jan. 6 insurrection.</p>

The latest mass shooting came as the nation tried to find cause to celebrate its founding and the bonds that still hold it together. It was supposed to be a day for taking off work, flocking to parades, devouring hot dogs and burgers at backyard barbecues and gathering under a canopy of stars and exploding fireworks.

“On a day that we came together to celebrate community and freedom, we are instead mourning the tragic loss of life and struggling with the terror that was brought upon us,” Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering said.

The Highland Park parade began around 10 a.m. but was suddenly halted 10 minutes later after shots were fired. Hundreds of parade-goers — some visibly bloodied — fled the area, leaving behind chairs, baby strollers and blankets. Authorities brought a person of interest into custody Monday evening.

As the Highland Park community mourned, fireworks began thundering in neighboring towns and across the country. Pyrotechnics bloomed shortly after nightfall in Boston and New York City, where a kaleidoscope of color exploded over the Hudson River and illuminated skyscrapers.

President Joe Biden, in remarks Monday celebrating 246 years of America’s independence, sought to reassure a nation both exhausted and unsettled by recent events.

“In recent days, there’s been reason to think this country is moving backwards, that freedom is being reduced, that rights we assumed were protected are no longer,” Biden said in remarks to military families and administration officials enjoying a picnic on the South Lawn of the White House. “I know it can be exhausting and unsettling, but tonight I want you to know we’re going to get through all of this.”

Biden said many [people see a divided country](#), but “I believe we are more united than we are divided.” He [tweeted](#) earlier in the day about the shooting, calling it “senseless gun violence that has yet again brought grief to an American community this Independence Day.”

“I will not give up fighting the epidemic of gun violence,” the president tweeted.

These are precarious times: An economic recession lurks, and the Highland Park shooting will weigh on a national psyche already raw from mass shootings like those seen recently at a Texas elementary school and a New York supermarket.

Sharp social and political divisions have also been laid bare by recent Supreme Court decisions overturning the constitutional right to abortion and striking down a New York law limiting who may carry a gun in public.

Nevertheless, many had reason to gather and celebrate for the first time in three years amid easing coronavirus precautions.

Nathan’s Famous Fourth of July hot dog eating contest returned to its traditional location in Brooklyn’s Coney Island neighborhood after two years elsewhere thanks to the pandemic.

“It’s beautiful to be back here,” Joey “Jaws” Chestnut told ESPN after winning the men’s competition by downing 63 hot dogs and buns — even as he momentarily put a protester who rushed the stage in a chokehold. Miki Sudo chomped 40 franks to win the women’s event.

Colorful displays were scheduled to light up the night sky from coast to coast. However, others, particularly in drought-stricken and wildfire-prone regions of the West, would forgo them.

Fireworks were the suspected cause behind a fire in Centerville, Utah, that led to the evacuation of dozens of homes and the cancellation of some of its Independence Day events, officials said.

It was a different matter in Phoenix, which is again going without fireworks — not because of the pandemic or fire concerns but supply-chain issues.

In emotional ceremonies across the country, some swore oaths of citizenship, qualifying them to vote in the upcoming midterm elections.

During a ceremony for naturalized citizens held at Mount Vernon, the Virginia home of George Washington, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told 52 people originally from 42 different countries that they were essential to building a strong labor force.

"Immigrants strengthen our workforce, and, in the process, help drive the resiliency and vitality of our economy," Yellen said in remarks prepared for the Monday event.

For many, July 4 was also a chance to set aside political differences and to celebrate unity, reflecting on the revolution that gave rise to history's longest-living democracy.

"There's always something to divide or unite us," says Eli Merritt, a political historian at Vanderbilt University whose upcoming book traces the fraught founding of the United States.

But he sees the Jan. 6 hearings probing last year's storming of the U.S. Capitol as a reason for hope, an opportunity to rally behind democratic institutions. Even though not all Americans or their elected representatives agree with the committee's work, Merritt is heartened by the fact that it's at least somewhat bipartisan.

"Moral courage as a locus for Americans to place hope, the willingness to stand up for what is right and true in spite of negative consequences to oneself," he said. "That is an essential glue of constitutional democracy."

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HEADLINE	07/04 Covid fatigue hits holiday weekend
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/covid-fatigue-hits-holiday-weekend-as-cases-spike-in-6-washington-counties
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Health officials say COVID is exploding in our state and the CDC is recommending people mask up in six counties in an effort to curb new infections.</p> <p>The statewide seven-day case rate is around 241 new cases per 100,000 people, and 10% of all hospital beds are being used by COVID patients. Officials say 68% of the state's population has received at least two doses of the vaccine.</p> <p>As the holiday weekend continues, health officials warn COVID remains a threat for our most vulnerable neighbors.</p> <p>"It's nice, the weather is so nice," said Tessa Sharp. "We can be outside, so that's probably the best."</p> <p>Sharp and her pal Harrison Cook hit the water on kayaks, and both agree that COVID can sometimes feel like a distant memory.</p> <p>"I feel safe," said Cook. "A coworker just got it, but he's doing okay. I think if we're on the water, we will be far from people."</p> <p>But escape is not our reality as COVID remains nearly everywhere across Washington State. Health officials say cases are rising fast with 200 new cases being reported among six counties: Garfield, Spokane, Lewis, Pacific, Grays Harbor and Thurston Counties.</p> <p>"We have seen a slight uptick in deaths in hospitalizations across the state since May," said Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett from the Washington State Department of Health. "The uptick in deaths remains stable at this time."</p>

	<p>Most people who spoke with FOX 13 News shared concern that the disease is continuing to impact many, and that they planned to continue wearing masks to protect others.</p> <p>Yet, other people shared a sentiment that the summer 2022 season should mean the end of lockdowns, and that mask mandates were long destined to history.</p> <p>"I'm trying to live my life," said Dillon Frederick. I'm trying to live my life, not be too close to crowds. That's why we are outside."</p> <p>Frederickson's friend shared similar sentiment.</p> <p>"I never wore one," said Sean Cintas. "I never liked it. I am back to normal."</p> <p>But what is normal, is that COVID is not over. Health officials insist wearing masks indoors can help protect yourself and those you love, and those who continue working the front line of a seemingly endless pandemic.</p> <p>"Hospital and emergency departments are reporting significant stress such as workforce shortages and difficulty to discharge patients," said Kwan-Gett.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Seattle housing market signs of 'cooling'
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-housing-market-shows-signs-of-cooling-amid-surgin-mortgage-rates
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Whether you're buying or selling a home, summer is typically the time when the housing market heats up.</p> <p>But the pandemic is throwing the typical rules out the window.</p> <p>Redfin's chief economist says the housing market is cooling off due to mortgage rates, which now sit close to 6 percent.</p> <p>Pending home sales posted their largest decline since May 2020. Redfin said it's seeing buyers back off and sellers who don't want to deal with the hassle of selling in a cooling market.</p> <p>Buyers don't necessarily have to go above and beyond, like bid above asking price and waive inspections and financing contingencies.</p> <p>"I think right now if you felt like you couldn't compete just a couple months ago, I think now is a good time to revisit the market," Redfin chief economist Daryl Fairweather said. "I think it's going to be more expensive if you're borrowing to buy a home, but at least it will be easier for you to get the home you really like that's within your budget."</p> <p>The median asking price of newly-listed homes for sale is down 1.5 percent from the all-time high it reached in spring, according to Redfin.</p> <p>"Overall I think we're going to see the housing market continue to cool through the end of the year," Fairweather said. "We may see some month-over-month price declines. Part of that has to do with all the best homes selling earlier in the year when people are really out there."</p> <p>In Seattle, homes are still selling quickly, staying on the market for about five days.</p> <p>Fairweather says, "It's not as competitive as it was last year and in a place like Seattle that means going from a home getting dozens of offers to only getting two, three offers."</p>

	<p>The high cost and lack of inventory still pose big challenges to Seattle buyers.</p> <p>"If you can buy in Seattle, it's still a good time because long run I'm bullish about prices going up," Fairweather said. "There's only so many places to buy in Seattle. There's so much limited inventory and people are still moving in from more expensive places like San Francisco."</p> <p>The most competitive neighborhoods may be worth a revisit. Fairweather says those neighborhoods are having a more abrupt reaction to higher mortgage rates. That includes areas in Bellevue and Kirkland.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 CDC recommends 15 counties wear masks
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/cdc-washington-counties-masks/281-588a5836-4834-4cee-820b-119177752d3a
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — People in over a dozen Washington state counties should begin wearing masks indoors in public and on public transportation again, according to recommendations from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>The latest information from the CDC shows that 15 counties have COVID-19 community levels rated “high,” meaning they have had 200 or more new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people in the last seven days, or they’ve had more than 20 new COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 people within a seven-day period.</p> <p>According to CDC data calculated on June 30, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis, Thurston, Pierce, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Ferry, Lincoln, Spokane, Walla Walla, Columbia and Asotin counties all have “high” COVID-19 community levels.</p> <p>King, the state’s most populous, and Snohomish counties both are considered to have “medium” transmission levels, according to the CDC map.</p> <p>The Washington State Department of Health said last week that the state is seeing a slight decline in cases as of June 12. However, self-testing or not testing at all may be contributing to the decline.</p> <p>The cases reported to the Department of Health likely represent less than 10% of infections in Washington, according to the department.</p> <p>Washington State Department of Health officials said there is a slight uptick in hospitalizations but deaths remain stable. Hospitals are still very full and are reporting stress due to workforce shortages and difficulty discharging patients.</p> <p>The CDC said anyone at risk for severe illness in those 15 counties should consider taking additional precautions besides simply wearing a mask, like staying 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, and washing their hands often.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Calif. immigration detention facility empty
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/immigration-detention-facility-near-empty-in-california/
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES (AP) — A sprawling, privately run detention center in the wind-swept California desert town of Adelanto could house nearly 2,000 migrants facing the prospect of deportation. These days, though, it’s nearly empty.</p> <p>The Adelanto facility is an extreme example of how the U.S. government’s use of guaranteed minimum payments in contracts with private companies to house immigrant detainees might have a potential financial downside. In these contracts, the government commits to pay for a certain number of beds, whether they’re used or not.</p>

The government pays for at least 1,455 beds a day at Adelanto, but so far this fiscal year reports an average daily population of 49 detainees. Immigrant advocates say the number of detainees at Adelanto is currently closer to two dozen because authorities can't bring in more migrants under a federal judge's 2020 pandemic-related ruling.

The U.S. government pays to guarantee 30,000 immigration detention beds are available in four dozen facilities across the country, but so far this fiscal year about half, on average, have been occupied, according to Immigration and Customs Enforcement data. Over the past two years, immigration detention facilities across the United States have been underutilized as authorities were forced to space out detainees — in some cases, such as at Adelanto, by court order — to limit the spread of COVID-19.

"The government is still paying them to keep the facility open," said Lizbeth Abeln, deportation defense director at the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice in Southern California. "It's really concerning they're still getting paid for all the beds every single day. It's empty."

At a facility in Tacoma, Washington, the guaranteed minimum is 1,181 beds and the average daily population so far this fiscal year is 369, according to official data. A detention center in Jena, Louisiana, has a minimum of 1,170 beds, with an average daily population of 452.

ICE currently reports 23,390 detainees in custody, official data shows. The agency has long spent money on unused detention space by including guaranteed minimum payments in its contracts, according to a Government Accountability Office report focused on the years before the pandemic. The minimum number of beds the government paid to guarantee rose 45% from the 2017 fiscal year to May 2020, the report said.

Officials at ICE's headquarters were asked to comment and initially did not. On Monday, an agency spokesperson said in an email that ICE doesn't comment on pending litigation and is complying with the court's order regarding Adelanto.

In annual budget documents, officials said the agency aims to use 85% to 90% of detention space generally, and pays to have guaranteed minimum beds ready to go in case they're needed. Officials wrote that they need flexibility to deal with emergencies or sudden big increases in border crossings. They said safety and security are the top priority at the detention centers, while acknowledging the pandemic "greatly decreased bed utilization."

The average cost of a detention bed was \$144 each day during the last fiscal year, the documents show.

Immigrant advocates say the pandemic is proof that the U.S. doesn't need to detain immigrants as much as authorities have claimed. Deportation agents have ramped up use of a monitoring app to keep tabs on immigrants heading for deportation hearings instead of locking people up, they said. As of June, the agency was tracking more than 200,000 people using the SmartLink app, the government's data shows.

"The federal government, probably like all of us, didn't think COVID would go on this long," said Michael Kaufman, senior staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, which sued for the release of detainees in Adelanto. "This has been an accidental test case that shows they don't need a detention capacity anywhere near what they're saying."

The Adelanto facility — which is run by Boca Raton, Florida-based The Geo Group — is one of the biggest in the country and often houses immigrants arrested in the greater Los Angeles area. It has long been subject to complaints by detainees of shoddy medical care, and on a 2018 visit to the facility inspectors also found nooses in detainees cells and overly restrictive segregation.

In August 2019, more than 1,600 detainees were held at the facility 60 miles (100 kilometers) northeast of Los Angeles, according to a state report.

Soon after COVID-19 hit, immigrant advocates sued over safety concerns. U.S. District Judge Terry Hatter barred ICE from bringing in new detainees and capped the number of detainees to 475. He ordered detainees be spaced out and have room to stretch, walk and use the restroom and shower, and noted an unknown number of staff and detainees didn't wear masks.

"This case involves human lives whose reasonable safety is entitled to be enforced and protected by the Court pursuant to the United States Constitution," Hatter wrote in 2021.

Since then, immigration authorities have been bringing new detainees to a 750-bed annex in Adelanto that was previously a state prison. But immigrant advocates said the annex is also running well below occupancy.

Geo, which also runs the annex, declined to comment and referred all questions to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Thomas P. Giles, ICE's field office director for enforcement and removal operations in greater Los Angeles, said limited bed space locally means some immigrants detained in Southern California could be transferred elsewhere.

"Here in Los Angeles, we have only a limited amount of bed space so some of the people that we arrest, if we don't have bed space, we're going to fly them to Phoenix or Atlanta or another part of the country for bed space," Giles said during a recent interview. "That doesn't necessarily affect our operations, but it puts more logistics into it."

In Adelanto, the Department of Justice runs immigration courts where detainees have their deportation cases heard. Currently, judges in these courtrooms are hearing the cases of immigrants elsewhere in the country using video due to dwindling numbers at the desert facility, said Immigration Judge Mimi Tsankov, president of the National Association of Immigration Judges.

Over time, hundreds of detainees have been released on bond or due to health concerns or deported, and some wings of the facility have been closed down, said Eva Bitran, an ACLU staff attorney.

"It's a tremendous waste of resources," she said.

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HEADLINE	07/04 How many homeless people in King Co.?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/how-many-homeless-people-are-in-king-county-depends-who-you-ask/
GIST	<p>Since the data-driven Marc Dones was hired to lead the new King County Regional Homelessness Authority, one of their main priorities has been to get an accurate count of the homeless population.</p> <p>"You have to understand the scope and scale of the problem in order to design solutions to meet the need," Dones said.</p> <p>Now, Dones and the Authority have two different counts: 13,368 and 40,800. Both are larger than the previous estimate of the homeless population conducted in 2020.</p> <p>They didn't want to have two counts. But the federal government mandates one of them, and the Authority says the other is more accurate.</p> <p>The different methods used to arrive at the two counts also situate Seattle in a national conversation about whether more accurate surveys lead to finer-tuned responses to people's needs.</p> <p>Whether or not the Authority will have to continue to do two counts, officials say they are creating models the rest of the country could look to.</p>

A pivot that led to innovation

The Authority had originally announced in November it would [skip the 2022 Point-In-Time Count](#), a biannual homeless census mandated by the federal government, saying it undercounts and provides an inaccurate picture of homelessness. King County has conducted a Point-In-Time Count every year for decades, an effort that used to rely partially on volunteers walking around the county on a single day in January, literally trying to count each homeless person they saw.

Dones has moved to using a count that tracks every homeless person who uses services like shelter, medical and behavioral health throughout an entire year, which the Authority says captures a more holistic count of homelessness in the county. This is the one that produced the 40,800 figure.

“Knowing that over 40,000 people are experiencing homelessness in King County means that we have to reset expectations and examine resources,” Dones said.

But the federal government disagrees with de-emphasizing the Point-In-Time Count.

The Point-In-Time Count is the “only data-collection effort that systematically counts people in unsheltered locations,” said Vanessa Krueger, a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD requires a Point-In-Time Count at least every two years to receive certain federal funds for homelessness services.

The Authority agrees that relying only on data that tracks people who use services could miss unsheltered homeless people who don’t use any.

Spokesperson Anne Martens said the Authority’s announcement that it would skip the 2022 Point-In-Time Count was based on miscommunication. She said the Authority thought it wasn’t required since 2021’s count was waived by the federal government due to the pandemic, and the count is required only every two years.

Once the Authority learned that a count in 2022 was required, it had to pivot quickly. The typical way to count unsheltered homeless people, by walking around the entire county, is labor- and time-intensive. Zack Almquist, a sociology professor at the University of Washington, said he suggested to the Authority a new way to conduct this year’s Point-In-Time Count called “respondent-driven sampling.”

The idea, Almquist said, is to find the ratio of sheltered to unsheltered homeless people in King County. Then, from the total number of sheltered homeless people in the county, which is already tracked, they could extrapolate the unsheltered population.

Authority staff and partners, many who have experience living outside, went to outdoor locations they knew people lived in and provided bus tickets for people to go to hubs to be interviewed. Interviewers asked them whether they were sheltered or unsheltered and the ratio of homeless people they know who are sheltered versus unsheltered. They also gave survey participants \$25 gift cards and asked them to recruit other people they know who are homeless.

The survey reached more than 500 people spread throughout nine areas in the county.

“Because this method relies on using people’s personal networks, it tends to do a very good job finding people that would otherwise be hard to reach using more typical survey methods,” Almquist said.

Almquist said this method can be more accurate than the way Point-In-Time Counts have been conducted in the past, which can miss people because they’re hard to see or are in rural areas that are difficult to access for staff or volunteers.

They counted 13,368 homeless people, a 14% increase from 2020. The estimate of people in tents, vehicles or other places unfit for human habitation grew even more, 38%.

Almquist and the Authority say the increase between the 2020 and 2022 Point-In-Time Counts likely reflects both an increase in the homeless population and the change in methodology.

The Authority received a special exception in 2022 to do the Point-In-Time Count in this way, but CEO Marc Dones said the new methodology could spark conversation about changing how Point-In-Time Counts are done at the federal level.

Limitations and criticisms

Some homelessness data experts say the Authority's new method of counting is not necessarily better or worse than the old way. Marisa Zapata, Director of Portland State University's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative, said that while traditional Point-In-Time Counts may miss people because surveyors can't see them, there may be people who don't want to come in and be interviewed.

"I am concerned about how expectations of going to a place would depress turnout for people who are immigrants, undocumented community members, and people with warrants or significant criminal justice interactions," Zapata said.

In the Authority's March governing committee meeting, some committee members expressed similar concerns.

"I'm really curious about bringing people to a hub, what kind of disruption that creates rather than if you're going out to find people, asking these questions where they live," said Redmond Mayor Angela Birney.

Authority leaders and partners say that using people with lived experience of homelessness who conduct interviews in a trauma-informed way, and using people's own networks, helped mitigate those concerns.

"I think that trying alternative approaches like respondent-driven sampling is worth trying. No method is precise, and all have flaws," said Dennis Culhane, a homelessness expert at the University of Pennsylvania.

While the Authority was conducting the required 2022 Point-In-Time Count, it was working simultaneously on another project, a series of in-depth conversations asking people in the region questions such as how they became homeless, what that experience has been like and what services they need. The Authority says this will provide additional insight into the unsheltered homeless population, some of whom don't currently access any services.

"People have not been asked to really tell us this: 'What is your story? What is missing?' And they're really excited about that opportunity," said Regional Homelessness Authority CEO Dones in a March governing committee meeting.

The Authority is analyzing over 500 oral histories, which it plans to present later this summer.

Another way to count homelessness

Other communities around the country have also been moving to de-emphasize the Point-In-Time Count, or at least supplement it.

One approach, led by a national homelessness advocacy group called Community Solutions, uses "by-name data," which enumerates each homeless person by name combined with their homeless history, health records and housing needs, updated in real time or every month. About 110 cities and counties around the U.S. have partnered with the organization to move toward using by-name data.

Community Solutions says by-name data can more accurately show changes in homeless populations, and also provide deeper understanding of the inflows and outflows of homelessness.

	<p>Mecklenburg County, which contains Charlotte, North Carolina, adopted the by-name data approach three years ago. Courtney LaCaria, Mecklenburg County’s housing and homelessness research coordinator, says homelessness staff can also use it to triage services for specific individuals.</p> <p>“They’re seeing, ‘OK, who’s next up for housing? How do we make sure we’ve got the right slot?’” LaCaria said. “When you look at it by name, you are able to be more accurate with how you’re allocating services.”</p> <p>LaCaria says Mecklenburg County still does the Point-In-Time Count as well “because you have the dollars attached to it,” and says it’s also a way for community members who help conduct the count to connect with homeless people.</p> <p>HUD says by-name lists can be useful, but it has no plans to get rid of the Point-In-Time count because “by-name lists rarely cover a community’s entire unsheltered population.”</p> <p>King County and Seattle have used by-name lists at high-profile encampments like Woodland Park to identify everyone staying there and their needs, in order to find them housing before clearing the encampment. The Authority said it’s building a technology platform that would allow it to manage by-name data on a larger scale, and that it could be another useful way to count its homeless population.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Kremlin clamping down on dissent?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/04/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#a-spate-of-arrests-suggests-the-kremlin-is-further-clamping-down-on-dissent
GIST	<p>They came for Dmitri Kolker, an ailing physicist, in the intensive care ward. They came for Ivan Fedotov, a hockey star, as he was leaving practice with a film crew in tow. They came for Vladimir Mau, a state university rector, the week he was re-elected to the board of Gazprom.</p> <p>The message sent by these high-profile detentions: Nearly anyone is now punishable in Vladimir V. Putin’s Russia.</p> <p>The flurry of arrests across the country in recent days has signaled that the Kremlin is intent on tightening the noose around Russian society even further. It appears to be a manifestation of President Putin’s declaration in the early weeks of his war in Ukraine that Russia needed to cleanse itself of pro-Western “scum and traitors,” and it is creating an unmistakable chill.</p> <p>“Every day feels like it could be the last,” Leonid Gozman, 71, a commentator who continues to speak out against Mr. Putin and the war, said in a phone interview from Moscow, acknowledging the fear that he, too, could be arrested.</p> <p>None of the targets of the recent crackdown was an outspoken Kremlin critic. But each represented an outward-looking Russia that Mr. Putin increasingly describes as an existential threat. And the ways they were taken into custody appeared designed to make waves.</p> <p>Mr. Kolker, the physicist, entered the hospital last week for treatment for late-stage cancer, so weak that he was unable to eat. The next day, agents for the Federal Security Service, the successor agency to the K.G.B., arrived and, accusing him of treason, flew him to a Moscow jail. Over the weekend, he died in custody.</p> <p>It was unclear why the F.S.B. targeted Mr. Kolker, 54, a specialist in quantum optics. State media reported that he had been jailed on suspicion of passing secrets abroad. But the F.S.B. has increasingly jailed scientists in a campaign that critics call an unjustified crackdown on freedom of thought.</p>

Mr. Kolker's arrest came at the same time as the arrest on fraud charges of Mr. Mau, a leading Russian economist who is the head of a sprawling state university, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

Mr. Mau had joined more than 300 senior academic officials in signing a March open letter calling the invasion of Ukraine a "necessary decision," and he was re-elected to the board of Gazprom, the Russian energy giant, just last week. But he also had a reputation as someone who was working within Mr. Putin's system to try to nudge it in a more open and pro-Western direction.

His Kremlin ties were not enough, it turned out, to save Mr. Mau from a fraud case that critics said appeared designed to snuff out the remaining pockets of dissent in Russian academia.

Mr. Fedotov, 25, one the hockey world's up-and-coming stars at goalie, helped the Russian Olympic Committee men's ice hockey team win a silver medal at the Winter Olympics in Beijing and has signed with the Philadelphia Flyers.

On Friday, as Mr. Fedotov was leaving a practice session in St. Petersburg, he was stopped by a group of men and taken away in a van, according to a television journalist who was filming a special report about him and saw the incident.

Mr. Fedotov's alleged crime, according to Russian news agencies: evading military service. Russian men under 27 are required to serve for one year, although sports stars are typically able to avoid conscription.

His elaborate detention was widely perceived as punishment for his having chosen to play in the United States rather than stay in Russia. But Russia's sports minister, Oleg Matytsin, dismissed that idea.

"Live according to the law," he said, "and everything will be fine."

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HEADLINE	07/03 US vets train Ukrainians near front lines
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/03/us/politics/american-combat-volunteers-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>A democracy came under attack. The United States saw a threat to an ally and also to the entire world order, but it feared that sending troops could spark a nuclear war. So, instead, it supplied weapons. And a small number of American Special Operations trainers started quietly working with the local military.</p> <p>That was the situation in South Vietnam in 1961, a few years before full-blown U.S. military involvement, when the American presence was limited to a military "advisory group."</p> <p>It is also the situation in Ukraine today. As a bloody conflict churns on, small teams of American Special Operations veterans are training Ukrainian soldiers near the front lines and, in some cases, helping to plan combat missions.</p> <p>There is a notable difference, though. In Vietnam, the trainers were active-duty troops under the control of the Pentagon. In Ukraine, where the United States has avoided sending any troops, the trainers are civilian volunteers, supported by online donations and operating entirely on their own.</p> <p>"This is why I became a Green Beret," said Perry Blackburn Jr., a retired Army Special Forces lieutenant colonel who spent 34 years in uniform in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Egypt, Somalia and Jordan. He is now in Ukraine as a civilian doing what he once did in the military: training local forces to fight a common enemy.</p> <p>"To not use my talents in a real time of need would be a waste," said Mr. Blackburn, 60, who was one of a handful of Special Forces soldiers who rode into Afghanistan on horseback at the start of the U.S. invasion in 2001 and is funding similar efforts now through thousands of small online donations from the public.</p>

“At my age, I’ve seen enough death and I want to try to stop the bloodshed,” he said. “We need to give people the means to defend themselves.”

Whether this new type of crowdfunded military support is wise is up for debate. Some experts caution that the presence of American volunteers could lead to some kind of tragic mishap that entangles the United States in a Vietnam-style escalation. Russia says that it would treat volunteer fighters as mercenaries and that they [could be executed](#) if captured. The United States discourages Americans from participating in the conflict. It pulled out its 150 military trainers before the war began and now relies on [a few dozen commandos](#) from other NATO countries to coordinate the flow of weapons inside Ukraine.

But the volunteers dismiss the idea that they might be stoking a larger war. Instead, they say, they are working to prevent one, by training Ukrainian fighters to put up better resistance against the Russians and deter further aggression.

Either way, Americans are in Ukraine. An unknown number are [fighting on the front lines](#). Others volunteer to be members of casualty evacuation teams, bomb disposal specialists, logistics experts and trainers. At least 21 Americans have been wounded in combat since the war started, according to a nonprofit organization that evacuates them. [Two have been killed](#), two have been captured and [one is missing in action](#).

Mr. Blackburn and a small group of volunteers work directly with the Ukrainian military, teaching marksmanship, maneuvering, combat first aid and other basic skills while constantly shifting locations of training camps to avoid Russian rocket attacks.

They say they do all of it without any input from the Pentagon.

“We have no communication with the U.S. military, period,” he said in an interview from his home in Tampa, Fla., where he recently returned to resupply before returning to the war zone. “That’s a line they don’t want to cross. They are not going to take any responsibility for our well-being or our actions.”

Then he laughed and added, “In fact, they’d probably do just the opposite.”

Not all volunteers looking to work with the Ukrainian military come with decades of experience. Mr. Blackburn and several other veterans in Ukraine said they had encountered would-be trainers with overinflated résumés and, in some cases, no military experience at all.

In a statement, the Defense Department said it “is not affiliated with any of these groups” and recommends “that U.S. citizens not travel to Ukraine or depart immediately if it is safe to do so.”

Before the war, the U.S. military regularly deployed uniformed trainers to Ukraine. As soon as Russia invaded, the Biden administration [pulled out all troops](#). “We will not fight the third world war in Ukraine,” President Biden said.

The president vowed that the United States would continue to support Ukraine with weapons and has committed [\\$6.8 billion](#) in security aid. American troops are training Ukrainian forces in Poland and Germany. But Mr. Biden [drew a clear line](#) in May, saying the U.S. military would not directly fight the Russians.

The attempt to avert direct conflict, though, left a void just as the Ukrainian military’s demand for training skyrocketed. And freelance volunteers are filling it.

“We are executing U.S. foreign policy in a way the military can’t,” said Andrew Milburn, a retired Marine Corps Special Operations colonel who leads a group of volunteer veterans who provide training and advice.

Speaking by phone from a village about 15 miles from the front lines in eastern Ukraine, Mr. Milburn said his efforts supported U.S. goals while insulating the United States from involvement. “I’m plausible deniability,” he said. “We can do the work, and the U.S. can say they have nothing to do with us, and that is absolutely true.”

Soon after the war started, Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, appealed for international volunteers to join the fight against Russia. The first Americans to answer his call often were amateur adventurers and military misfits looking for action, several volunteers said in interviews.

The group focused on training tends to be older and more experienced. Many climbed the ranks of elite Special Operations units and have done similar work all over the globe.

During 31 years in the Marine Corps, Mr. Milburn held leadership positions in the U.S. military’s Joint Special Operations command, including as the commander of the [Marine Raider Regiment](#). He initially went to Ukraine as [a freelance journalist](#) but said he changed course after seeing the Ukrainian military hand assault rifles to inexperienced students, shopkeepers and other citizens before sending them to fight.

“This country has no shortage of trigger pullers. They didn’t need one more,” he said, explaining why he chose not to fight. “But I knew if I could train the trigger pullers, I could have an exponential effect.”

Mr. Milburn connected with about two dozen other Special Operations veterans in Ukraine, and soon they were calling themselves [the Mozart Group](#) — a name chosen as a retort to a private Russian military company, [the Wagner Group](#). Through contacts Mr. Milburn and others had built years before with Ukrainian Special Operations troops, the Mozart Group soon set up training camps close to the fighting. Mr. Milburn said it had trained about 2,500 Ukrainian troops.

The group offers basic military instruction for soldiers headed to the front and occasional classes on how to use American weapons, like the shoulder-fired [Javelin](#) anti-tank missile.

It also provides some specialized instruction and advice for Ukrainian commandos.

Mozart would be a natural conduit for U.S. military support, he said, but when he tries to contact American military officials in Western Europe, through both official communication and back channels, he receives no response.

“Every time we reach out, we get rebuffed,” he said. “They are so afraid that something bad is going to happen and it will look like it was the purview of the government. We are persona non grata.”

But the United States is wise to be cautious, said George Beebe, a former chief of the C.I.A.’s Russia analysis and the director of [the Quincy Institute](#), a nonpartisan foreign policy research institution.

“Just as in Vietnam, the risk is that we get inadvertently drawn deeper and deeper in, one small step at a time,” he said. “The difference is the stakes are higher in Ukraine. It would be much easier for the United States and Russia to get into a direct conflict that could quickly turn very serious.”

Few ever contemplated that Vietnam could grow into an enormous war, he noted. U.S. involvement started with a group of 300 soldiers in 1955 who trained South Vietnamese soldiers to respond to what some U.S. officials at the time called “[a minor civil war](#).” Slowly, the United States committed more men and more fire power — decisions that, at the time, seemed not just reasonable but necessary, Mr. Beebe said.

Americans began accompanying South Vietnamese platoons on missions, then supporting them with aircraft. As the effort grew, so did the American troop presence. Finally, a 1964 incident in the [Gulf of Tonkin](#) drew the United States directly into the war, eventually leaving 58,000 Americans dead without achieving any strategic goals.

"I'm not saying escalation in Ukraine is automatic," Mr. Beebe said. "But the danger is that we start crossing over red lines before we even know where they are."

There are, of course, clear differences between Southeast Asia in 1961 and Eastern Europe today.

The government in South Vietnam at the time was unpopular, wracked by corruption and facing a communist uprising in the countryside. Ukraine's president enjoys high approval ratings in a country united against the Russian invaders.

But just as in Vietnam, Mr. Beebe said, the United States is now forced to choose between only bad options, trying to support an ally without antagonizing a powerful foe.

Americans on the front lines say that Russia is stoking a broader conflict and that the United States has little choice but to respond.

Both Mr. Milburn and Mr. Blackburn said the United States should respond more aggressively and needed to send more sophisticated, medium-range weapons.

Mr. Blackburn said he understood the caution of the United States but felt it was misplaced because caution would only encourage Russian aggression.

"They are destroying whole cities, killing civilians indiscriminately. If that's not escalation, what is?" he said. "I don't see this so much as being like the years before Vietnam. To me, it's more like the years before World War II. People are going to wonder, looking back, why we didn't do more sooner."

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HEADLINE	07/04 Muslim pilgrims flock to Mecca for hajj
SOURCE	https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/290847
GIST	<p>White-robed worshippers from across the world have packed the streets of Mecca as Islam's holiest city prepares to host the biggest hajj pilgrimage since the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Banners welcoming the faithful, including the first international visitors since 2019, festooned squares and alleys, while armed security forces patrolled the ancient city, birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed.</p> <p>"This is pure joy," Sudanese pilgrim Abdel Qader Kheder told AFP in Mecca, ahead of the event expected to start on Wednesday. "I almost can't believe I am here. I am enjoying every moment."</p> <p>One million people, including 850,000 from abroad, are allowed at this year's hajj -- a key pillar of Islam that all able-bodied Muslims are required to perform at least once -- after two years of drastically curtailed numbers due to the pandemic.</p> <p>At least 650,000 overseas pilgrims have arrived so far in Saudi Arabia, the authorities said Sunday.</p> <p>In 2019, about 2.5 million people took part in the rituals, which include circling the Kaaba, the imposing black cube at Mecca's Grand Mosque, gathering at Mount Arafat and "stoning the devil" in Mina.</p> <p>The following year, foreigners were barred and worshippers were restricted to just 10,000, rising to 60,000 fully vaccinated Saudi citizens and residents in 2021, to stop the hajj turning into a global super-spreader.</p> <p>One million vaccinated pilgrims under the age of 65 will attend the hajj under strict sanitary conditions, with the Grand Mosque, the holiest site in Islam, scrubbed and disinfected 10 times a day.</p> <p>The rituals have seen numerous disasters, including a 2015 stampede that killed up to 2,300 people and a 1979 attack by hundreds of gunmen that left 153 dead, according to the official toll.</p>

- Unaccompanied women -

The pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, is a powerful source of prestige for the conservative desert kingdom and its de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is returning from the diplomatic wilderness.

Days after the hajj, Prince Mohammed will welcome US President Joe Biden who, with oil prices sent soaring by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has reneged on promises to turn Saudi Arabia into a "pariah" over the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents.

The hajj, which costs at least \$5,000 per person, is a money-spinner for the world's biggest oil exporter, bringing in about \$12 billion a year along with other religious visits.

It is also a chance to showcase a country that is undergoing rapid transformation, while still drawing regular complaints about human rights abuses and limits on personal freedoms.

Saudi Arabia -- which has under recent reforms permitted raves in Riyadh and mixed-gender beaches in Jeddah -- now also allows women to attend the hajj unaccompanied by a male relative, a requirement that was dropped last year.

- 'Serenity' -

Masks are no longer compulsory in most enclosed spaces in Saudi Arabia but they will be mandatory at the Grand Mosque. Pilgrims from abroad will have to submit a negative PCR test result.

The Grand Mosque will be "washed 10 times a day... by more than 4,000 male and female workers", with more than 130,000 litres (34,000 gallons) of disinfectant used each time, authorities said.

Since the start of the pandemic, Saudi Arabia has registered more than 795,000 coronavirus cases, 9,000 of them fatal, in a population of about 34 million.

Aside from Covid, another challenge is the scorching sun in one of the world's hottest and driest regions, which is becoming even more extreme through the effects of climate change.

Although summer has only just begun, temperatures have already topped 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in parts of Saudi Arabia.

But for Iraqi pilgrim Ahmed Abdul-Hassan al-Fatlawi, the hot weather is the last thing he thinks of when in Mecca.

"I am 60 years old, so it's normal if I get physically tired because of the hot weather, but I am in a state of serenity, and that's all that matters to me," he told AFP.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Updated Covid shots arriving too late?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/04/health/updated-covid-vaccines-omicron.html
GIST	<p>Roseann Renouf, 77, has grown tired of the current generation of coronavirus shots. Having “never been one for a lot of vaccination,” she decided to forgo the latest round of boosters after watching vaccinated friends contract Covid-19, even though the doses offer a critical extra layer of protection.</p> <p>“It’s just taking another same booster,” Ms. Renouf, a retired nurse anesthetist from Fort Worth, said. “They haven’t done anything different with them to cover new variants.”</p> <p>But her gripe about the Covid vaccines may soon be settled. American regulators committed last week to updating the 2020 vaccine recipes for this fall’s booster campaign with new formulas meant to defend</p>

against the ultra-contagious Omicron subvariants, offering Ms. Renouf and other holdouts a fresh reason to change their minds.

The Biden administration is betting that the new cocktails, the centerpiece of an effort to drastically speed up vaccine development, might appeal to the half of inoculated Americans who have so far spurned booster shots, a key constituency in the fight against future Covid waves.

Vaccine updates are becoming more urgent by the day, many scientists said. The most evasive forms of Omicron yet, [known as BA.4 and BA.5](#), appear to be driving a fresh surge of cases across much of the United States. The same subvariants have sent hospital admissions climbing in Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium and Israel.

Covid deaths in the United States, which had been [hovering for months near their lowest levels of the pandemic](#), are rising again. In the worst case, epidemiologists have predicted some 200,000 Covid deaths in the United States within the next year.

“We’re hoping that we can convince people to go get that booster,” said Dr. Peter Marks, who oversees the vaccines office at the Food and Drug Administration, “and help mature their immune response and help prevent another wave.”

Many scientists believe that updated boosters will be critical for diversifying people’s immune defenses as subvariants eat away at the protection offered by vaccines. Catching up with a virus that has been so rapidly mutating may be impossible, they said. But it was far better to be only a few months, rather than a couple of years, behind the pathogen.

“Omicron is so different that, to me, it seems pretty clear we’re starting to run out of ground in terms of how well these vaccines protect against symptomatic infections,” said Deepta Bhattacharya, an immunologist at the University of Arizona. “It’s very important that we update the shots.”

Now, the question is whether those modified boosters will arrive in time. In a bid to match the latest forms of the virus, the F.D.A. asked vaccine manufacturers to tailor their new shots to the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants, rather than to the original version of Omicron from last winter.

Virologists said that a subvariant vaccine would generate not only the strongest immune defenses against current versions of the virus, but also the type of broad antibody response that will help protect against whatever form of the virus emerges in the months ahead.

But building a fall booster campaign around vaccines at the forefront of the virus’s evolution could also come at a cost. Pfizer and Moderna said that they could deliver subvariant vaccine doses no earlier than October. Some F.D.A. advisers warned in a [public meeting last week](#) that the timeline could be slowed even further by any number of routine delays.

In contrast, a vaccine targeting the original version of Omicron is closer at hand: Moderna and Pfizer have already started making doses tailored to the original form of Omicron, and Moderna said that it could start supplying them this summer. Whether the benefits of a newer subvariant vaccine outweigh the drawbacks of having to wait longer depends on when exactly it arrives and how much havoc the virus wreaks before then, scientists said.

They said that having some form of an updated vaccine by the fall was crucial.

“I would lean toward thinking BA.4, BA.5 is a good choice unless it dramatically extends the timeline,” said Jesse Bloom, a virologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle, voicing support for the subvariant vaccine. “If using BA.4, BA.5 only modestly extends the timeline, I think it’s a good choice.”

The updated shots will test the public’s openness to an accelerated vaccine program that is reminiscent of the way annual flu shots are formulated, but that is entirely new when it comes to the coronavirus.

The original Covid vaccines had to withstand slow and laborious testing: Volunteers took the shots and then went about their lives while researchers tracked who got sick. But there is now ample evidence that the shots are safe. And any tweaks to the recipe could be wasted if scientists were to spend the better part of a year testing them.

Instead, vaccine manufacturers have been studying volunteers' blood samples in the lab to gauge their immune responses to a booster that is tailored to the first version of Omicron. The subvariant boosters have so far been through lighter testing: Pfizer has studied only how they have affected antibody responses in mice.

The F.D.A. said that it would not require clinical trial data for the subvariant boosters before authorization and would rely instead on studies of boosters targeting the original version of Omicron. Some scientists said that authorizing modified vaccines without time-consuming human studies was essential to keeping up.

"It just seems dangerous to overly bureaucratize the rollout of an updated vaccine," said Jeremy Kamil, a virologist at Louisiana State University Health Shreveport. Moving too slowly, he said, would risk leaving older and other vulnerable people exposed to a pathogen that looks different than what the original vaccines had prepared them for.

"If a bank robber's grown a beard and dyed their hair," he said, "it's going to help your response to know what they look like today rather than when they were 14 years old."

Some government vaccine advisers have said that regulators had not yet proven that updated boosters protected substantially better than existing boosters against severe Covid. Others have expressed concern that reformulating vaccines would undercut confidence in the vaccination program.

For some booster-shy Americans, though, the fact that the current offerings had grown dated was the source of their apathy.

"It probably helps a bit, the booster, but not to the extent of going to the trouble of getting it," said Cherry Alena, a retired medical secretary in her 70s from Northern California, whose last Covid vaccine was 16 months ago. "It's not specifically formulated for the thing that's going around."

A modified shot would appeal to her, she said, because "it gives you specific immunity against the specific thing."

Gaps in booster coverage have left the United States more exposed to deaths during Omicron waves. More than half of vaccinated Americans have not received a booster. Three-quarters of those eligible for a second booster have not gotten one.

This spring, people age 50 and older who had received a single booster were dying from Covid at four times the rate of those with two booster doses, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There are no certainties when it comes to forecasting the pathogen's evolution. Come winter, the virus could take an unexpected turn away from the Omicron branch of the evolutionary tree. And whereas flu viruses typically turn over in the course of years, new coronavirus variants can emerge and then start stampeding across the world within months.

But scientists said it was reassuring that the updated boosters — which would also contain a component of the original formulation — appeared to generate strong immune responses to many different versions of the virus. And for now, signs are pointing toward this winter's virus being a descendant of Omicron.

“The more time that passes, the more likely it is that anything new is going to emerge from Omicron,” said Trevor Bedford, an evolutionary biologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center.

Even though the coronavirus evolves faster than the flu, Dr. Bedford said, mRNA technology enables Covid shots to be modified more quickly, too. Decisions about the composition of an autumn flu vaccine are typically made in February, he noted; this fall’s coronavirus vaccines are not being decided upon until early summer.

And scientists have a wider window into what coronavirus strains are spreading and how quickly. “With SARS-CoV-2, we have 12 million genomes,” Dr. Bedford said of the virus. “For flu, we have collected 250,000 over decades.”

The F.D.A.’s decision to give its blessing to updated vaccines may have ripple effects across the globe, setting Moderna and Pfizer on the path to making those shots. But some countries may choose boosters targeting the earlier version of Omicron because they will be ready sooner.

Some F.D.A. advisers also said that a vaccine made for the original strain by a third company, Novavax, held promise as an Omicron-targeted booster. That shot is not yet authorized for use.

Scientists said they were eager for a clearer picture of how updated vaccine candidates would be chosen in the future and how quickly they could be made. Some also pressed for closer cooperation between American regulators and the World Health Organization, which supports updating the vaccines but with the original version of Omicron, not its latest subvariants, as a different way of broadening immune responses.

The ultimate goal, many scientists said, was to compress the time between when the next immune-dodging variant emerges and when people can be vaccinated against it.

“We’re now seven months out from when we first detected Omicron,” said Dr. Michael Z. Lin, a professor of neurobiology at Stanford who has tracked the regulatory process. “We need a rapid way for strain selection, and it needs to be more rapid than what we’ve done so far.”

Among those likely to line up for a modified vaccine is Randi Plevy, 57, of New York. Having been vaccinated, and then infected twice, she held off on getting a booster shot.

“Why am I getting a booster if it’s not going to protect me against what’s out there?” she said. “If they can demonstrate you’re getting ahead of the curve, and ‘Here is the latest and greatest that is going to protect you from the next strain,’ I think that’d be really attractive to a lot of people.”

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HEADLINE	07/03 ‘Alarm sounded’ on Russia threat to Ireland
SOURCE	https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40909337.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>The latest oversight report on Ireland's spying laws has “sounded the alarm” on the scale of the threat posed by Russian intelligence services to Ireland.</p> <p>Professor Edward Burke made the comment following the report of High Court judge Charles Meenan, who supervises the interception of phone calls and post, and access to traffic data on private communications.</p> <p>Digital rights expert TJ McIntyre said the report highlighted the "inadequate" nature of surveillance oversight in Ireland.</p> <p>Mr Justice Meenan’s report said the Russian invasion of Ukraine has “considerably increased the level of danger and threat to the security of the State”.</p>

His four-page report did not provide details, but the judge said he conducted a “close examination” of files on interceptions of communications by Gardaí and the Defence Forces during visits he conducted on one day last month.

In line with previous reports, all of which are only a few pages long, the report does not provide any statistical information on applications and warrants for interception or any breakdown by agency or nature of threat.

The report covers the year ending the 27 June 2022 and is submitted to the Taoiseach.

The judge said there are “very serious threats” to the State from people and groups both based inside the country and outside.

“These threats have increased in the past year,” he said.

Mr Justice Meenan said there was an urgent need to update legislation to allow Gardaí and the Defence Forces to access encrypted communications to combat organised crime gangs and to protect State security.

He said failure to modernise these laws – which date to 1993 – “will inevitably have serious consequences” for the security of the State and the prevention and investigation of serious crime.

In addition, he said legal issues arising out of the European Court of Justice ruling in the Graham Dwyer case – that general retention and accessing of communication data for the investigation of serious crime breached EU laws – had to be addressed.

Associate Professor in International Relations at Nottingham University, Edward Burke, said Mr Justice Meenan was given access to sensitive intelligence that “clearly indicates an escalating threat to Irish national security, especially from Russian intelligence”.

He said: “We have seen what Russia is capable of, including murdering EU citizens and residents, launching large scale cyber attacks to cripple public infrastructure and stealing sensitive intellectual property and private data.”

He said Ireland was an EU and global technology and communications hub and added: “Russia is attempting to take advantage of our weak legislation and paucity of counter-intelligence resources to target the EU and NATO. Ireland too has made it known that it is not neutral when it comes to Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine.”

He said: “Mr Justice Meenan has usefully given legislators and the public an indication of the scale of the threat. He has sounded the alarm. It is now up to the government to act and to act quickly.” Associate Professor at UCD Law School TJ McIntyre, who is also chair of Digital Rights Ireland, said the report showed why Irish oversight of surveillance was inadequate.

“The European Court of Justice has found mass storage of everyone’s telephone and internet records to be illegal, but the judge completely fails to acknowledge that, let alone say that this should stop,” he said.

“Instead, the judge is making recommendations for even more surveillance, despite having no technical expertise, without speaking to experts in the area.”

Donncha O’Connell, Professor of Law at NUI Galway and former member of Policing Commission, said problems with the current oversight system “should be noted” by the Government as it prepares its proposals on the establishment of the office of Independent Examiner of Security Legislation.

As well as revamping and resourcing Garda intelligence structures, and the establishment of a national intelligence analysis centre in the Department of the Taoiseach, the Policing Commission also

	recommended the creation of an Independent Examiner, to conduct “comprehensive and robust review” of terrorist and serious crime laws.
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HEADLINE	07/04 Protests erupt Akron over police shooting
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2022/07/04/protests-erupt-in-ohio-over-police-shooting-of-jayland-walker/
GIST	<p>Heated protests broke out in downtown Akron, Ohio, Sunday, raging late into the night, after police released graphic body camera video showing black DoorDash deliveryman Jayland Walker being shot dozens of times as he tried to flee a traffic stop.</p> <p>Demonstrations have been held around Akron since the June 27 police shooting of Walker, but they intensified Sunday after police made the video public, with Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan calling it “heartbreaking.”</p> <p>Video captured cops dressed in riot gear and carrying shields confronting demonstrators, who could be heard chanting, “F—k the police,” “Justice for Jayland” and “We are done dying,” reported News 5 Cleveland.</p> <p>Other videos depicted police officers deploying what appeared to be a dozen cannisters of tear gas in an attempt to disperse the crowd after someone had knocked over barricades around the Akron Justice Center, according to WKYC.</p> <p>During the unrest, protesters blocked traffic in the Highland Square and West Akron sections of the city, and someone had set a dumpster on fire and smashed windows of plows used to close off streets.</p> <p>At a press conference that was held Sunday to announce the release of the body camera video, authorities acknowledged that Walker, 25, was unarmed when cops chased him on foot and killed him with a barrage of bullets, but they believed he had fired at them earlier from his car and feared he was about to shoot again.</p> <p>It is unclear how many shots the eight officers involved in the incident fired, but Akron Police Chief Steve Mylett said the number could be more than 90, with the Walker suffering at least 60 bullet wounds — including after he was on the ground, according to an attorney for his family.</p> <p>A medical examiner who arrived on the scene found Walker lying handcuffed on his back, according to an ME “worksheet” in the case, the Beacon Journal reported. He reportedly had wounds to his face, torso and upper leg.</p> <p>Police attempted to pull over Walker’s car at around 12:30 p.m. last Monday for unspecified traffic and equipment violations, but he refused to stop, leading officers on a chase.</p> <p>Police said Walker fired a shot from his car during the pursuit, and a transportation department camera captured what appeared to be a muzzle flash coming from the vehicle.</p> <p>Mylett said that changed the nature of the case from “a routine traffic stop to now a public safety issue.”</p> <p>Body camera videos show what unfolded after the roughly six-minute pursuit. Several shouting officers with guns drawn approach the slowing car on foot, as it rolls up over a curb and onto a sidewalk.</p> <p>Walker wearing a ski mask exits the passenger door and runs toward a parking lot. Police chase him for about 10 seconds before officers fire from multiple directions, in a burst of shots that lasts 6 or 7 seconds.</p> <p>At least one officer had tried first to use a stun gun, but that was unsuccessful, police said.</p>

Mylett said Walker's actions are hard to distinguish on the video in real time, but a still photo seems to show him "going down to his waist area" and another appears to show him turning toward an officer. He said a third picture "captures a forward motion of his arm."

In a statement shared Sunday with reporters, the local police union said the officers thought there was an immediate threat of serious harm, and that it believes their actions and the number of shots will be found justified in line with their training and protocols. The union said the officers are cooperating with the investigation.

Police said more than 60 wounds were found on Walker's body but further investigation is needed to determine exactly how many rounds the officers fired and how many times Walker was hit.

The footage released by police ends with the officers' gunfire and doesn't show what happened next. Officers provided first aid, and one can be heard saying Walker still had a pulse, but he was later pronounced dead, Mylett said.

Mylett refused to say Sunday whether the shooting was justified and added that when a cop "makes the most critical decision in his or her life" and points a weapon at someone and fires, they have to explain "for every round down the barrel of a gun."

A handgun, a loaded magazine and an apparent wedding ring were found on the seat of the car. A casing consistent with the weapon was later found in the area where officers believed a shot had come from the vehicle.

State Attorney General Dave Yost vowed a "complete, fair and expert investigation" by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and cautioned that "body-worn camera footage is just one view of the whole picture."

Akron police are conducting a separate internal investigation about whether the officers violated department rules or policies.

The officers involved in the shooting are on paid administrative leave, which is standard practice in such cases.

Seven of the cops are white, and one is black, according to the department. Their length of service with Akron police ranges from one-and-a-half to six years, and none of them has a record of discipline, substantiated complaints or fatal shootings, it said.

NAACP President Derrick Johnson said in a statement that Walker's death wasn't self-defense, but "was murder. Point blank."

Walker's family is calling for accountability but also for peace, their lawyers said. One of the attorneys, Bobby DiCello, called the burst of police gunfire excessive and unreasonable, and said police handcuffed Walker before trying to provide first aid.

"How it got to this with a pursuit is beyond me," DiCello said.

He said Walker's family doesn't know why he fled from police. Walker was grieving the recent death of his fiancée, but his family had no indication of concern beyond that, and he wasn't a criminal, DiCello said.

"They want to turn him into a masked monster with a gun," DiCello said. "I ask you, as he's running away, what is reasonable? To gun him down? No, that's not reasonable."

The lawyer added: "I hope we remember that as Jayland ran across that parking lot, he was unarmed."

HEADLINE	07/02 First National Wildland Firefighter Day
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/thank-a-firefighter-on-first-annual-national-wildland-firefighter-day/
GIST	<p>Wildland firefighting is difficult, physically arduous work, often largely undertaken out of the public eye. Every year, thousands of federal, state, local, Tribal, military and contract firefighters and support personnel respond to wildland fires across the U.S. As a result of climate change and other factors, these wildfires are increasingly larger and more complex, placing additional demands on a dedicated workforce.</p> <p>In honor of our nation's wildland firefighters who answer the call throughout the year, the National Interagency Fire Center's Fire Management Board is proud to proclaim July 2, "National Wildland Firefighter Day." The board represents the national fire programs for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and USDA Forest Service, along with partners including the National Association of State Foresters, U.S. Fire Administration, the National Weather Service, and the Department of Defense. The July 2 date will hereafter be designated each year to honor the important work of wildland firefighters.</p> <p>"Today we pause to recognize our dedicated wildland firefighters before they head out once again to fight larger and more intense wildfires across the West," said Jerry Perez, Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Management. "These dedicated men and women are working to protect communities, private property and public lands in increasingly challenging conditions, and we are grateful for their work."</p> <p>"National Wildland Firefighter Day" will occur annually during the previously established, "Wildland Firefighter Week of Remembrance," (June 30-July 6), during which wildland firefighters review the lessons of previous fatality fires and incorporate those safety principles into firefighting today. "National Wildland Firefighter Day" is the first designation of a day specifically for wildland firefighters.</p> <p>"While we support and appreciate wildland fire personnel today and every day, National Wildland Firefighter Day is designed to recognize the hard work and devotion of all wildland firefighters and support personnel who are the backbone of the wildland fire community," said Grant Beebe, Bureau of Land Management Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation Management.</p> <p>On average, wildland firefighters respond to nearly 63,000 wildland fires every year across the U.S. Factors such as drought and wildfires in the wildland-urban interface have led to increasingly complex and challenging fire activity that starts earlier in the year and lasts later into the fall. Despite these conditions, wildland firefighters have remained dedicated and resilient – every year, they save lives, property, communities, infrastructure, and precious natural and cultural resources.</p> <p>"Firefighters are integral to state operations, including those we rely on to help us from our federal and local interagency partners, private fire service and Tribal nations," said George Geissler, Washington State Forester. "We could not do this alone."</p> <p>National Wildland Firefighter Day will offer an opportunity to reflect on those who have been lost during wildland firefighting while recognizing the on-going work of all federal, state, local, Tribal, military and contract wildland firefighters and support personnel.</p> <p>For more information on National Wildland Firefighter Day, including a history of wildland firefighting and a toolkit including social media posts, images for printing and video clips, visit: https://www.nifc.gov/nwffd</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 US-Mexico border deadliest land crossing
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/un-southern-border-deadliest-land-crossing/2022/07/04/id/1077201/
GIST	The southern border migrant crisis has produced the world's deadliest land crossing, a United Nations organization said.

"More than 1,238 lives have been lost during migration in the Americas in 2021, among them at least 51 children," the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Missing Migrants Project (MMP) reported.

"At least 728 of these deaths occurred on the United States-Mexico border crossing, making this the deadliest land crossing in the world, according to the data."

Nearly 500 migrants who died last year remain unidentified. Of those who have been identified, Mexicans (154) make up the largest group, followed by Guatemalans (129) and Venezuelans (94), the MMP report said.

The news came several days after 53 migrants, who were being smuggled into the U.S., died after being found inside a tractor-trailer sweltering under the Texas sun.

"The number of deaths on the United States-Mexico border last year is significantly higher than in any year prior, even before COVID-19," Edwin Viales, who comprised the new IOM report, said.

"Yet, this number remains an undercount due to the diverse challenges for data collection."

The deaths and disappearances recorded in 2021 accounted for the highest number of lives lost in the Americas since 2014, when MMP began documenting migrant deaths.

The total was a significant increase compared to 2020 (798 deaths) and 2019 (854 deaths).

Customs and Border Protection statistics showed that 239,416 migrants were encountered at the southern border in May – the fourth straight month of increasing encounters.

Nearly 2 million migrants have been released into the U.S. under President Joe Biden, the Center for Immigration Studies said late last month.

That was before the Supreme Court last week ruled that the Biden administration could end "Remain in Mexico" — a policy, begun under then-President Donald Trump, that required migrants to stay in Mexico to await U.S. hearings on their asylum claims.

IOM is part of the U.N. System as the leading intergovernmental organization promoting since 1951 humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all, with 174 member states and a presence in over 100 countries.

Since 2014, the MMP has recorded people who die in the process of migration towards an international destination, regardless of their legal status.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Turkey's annual inflation: 78.6%, 24yr-high
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/inflation-middle-east-turkey-prices-88883846ffe3b3d526dadf365abfcf34
GIST	<p>ISTANBUL (AP) — Annual inflation in Turkey hit 78.62% in June, the highest rate since 1998, according to official data released Monday.</p> <p>The Turkish Statistical Institute, or TurkStat, released the monthly figures as Turkey is experiencing a deepening cost-of-living crisis. Consumer prices rose by 4.95% on a monthly basis, the institute reported.</p> <p>While many countries are seeing rising consumer prices, critics blame Turkey's problems on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's economic policies.</p> <p>The Turkish leader insists that high borrowing costs cause inflation — a position that contradicts established economic thinking — and advocates lowering interest rates to boost growth and exports.</p>

	<p>Turkey's central bank had cut rates by 5 percentage points since September, to 14%, before pausing the cuts in January. The Turkish lira lost 44% of its value against the U.S. dollar last year.</p> <p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which led to a surge in gas, oil and grain prices, has compounded the situation in import-reliant Turkey.</p> <p>The sharpest increases in annual prices were in the transportation sector, at 123.37%, followed by food and non-alcoholic drinks prices at 93.93%, according to official data.</p> <p>TurkStat's figures have been questioned by economists, who allege the agency is subject to political pressure. The dismissals and resignations of senior TurkStat officials in recent months have added to claims of government interference.</p> <p>The Inflation Research Group, which is made up of independent economists, on Monday said Turkey's true level of annual inflation for June was 175.55%.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Putin declares victory Donbas region
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-army-donetsk-89326e201d66191b815971ceb1a1c6b2
GIST	<p>POKROVSK, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared victory in the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk, one day after Ukrainian forces withdrew from their last remaining bulwark of resistance in the province.</p> <p>Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin in a televised meeting Monday that Russian forces had taken control of Luhansk, which together with the neighboring Donetsk province makes up Ukraine's industrial heartland of Donbas.</p> <p>Shoigu told Putin that "the operation" was completed on Sunday after Russian troops overran the city of Lysychansk, the last stronghold of Ukrainian forces in Luhansk.</p> <p>Putin, in turn, said that the military units "that took part in active hostilities and achieved success, victory" in Luhansk, "should rest, increase their combat capabilities."</p> <p>Putin's declaration came as Russian forces tried to press their offensive deeper into eastern Ukraine after the Ukrainian military confirmed that its forces had withdrawn from Lysychansk on Sunday. Luhansk governor Serhii Haidai said on Monday that Ukrainian forces had retreated from the city to avoid being surrounded.</p> <p>"There was a risk of Lysychansk encirclement," Haidai told the Associated Press, adding that Ukrainian troops could have held on for a few more weeks but would have potentially paid too high a price.</p> <p>"We managed to do centralized withdrawal and evacuate all injured," Haidai said. "We took back all the equipment, so from this point withdrawal was organized well."</p> <p>The Ukrainian General Staff said Russian forces were now focusing their efforts on pushing toward the line of Siversk, Fedorivka and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, about half of which is controlled by Russia. The Russian army has also intensified its shelling of the key Ukrainian strongholds of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, deeper in Donetsk.</p> <p>On Sunday, six people, including a 9-year-old girl, were killed in the Russian shelling of Sloviansk and another 19 people were wounded, according to local authorities. Kramatorsk also came under fire on Sunday.</p>

An intelligence briefing Monday from the British Defense Ministry supported the Ukrainian military's assessment, noting that Russian forces will "now almost certainly" switch to capturing Donetsk. The briefing said the conflict in Donbas has been "grinding and attritional," and is unlikely to change in the coming weeks.

While the Russian army has a massive advantage in firepower, military analysts say that it doesn't have any significant superiority in the number of troops. That means Moscow lacks resources for quick land gains and can only advance slowly, relying on heavy artillery and rocket barrages to soften Ukrainian defenses.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made capturing the entire Donbas a key goal in his war in Ukraine, now in its fifth month. Moscow-backed separatists in Donbas have battled Ukrainian forces since 2014 when they declared independence from Kyiv after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Russia formally recognized the self-proclaimed republics days before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged the withdrawal, but vowed that Ukrainian forces will fight their way back.

"If the command of our army withdraws people from certain points of the front where the enemy has the greatest fire superiority, in particular this applies to Lysychansk, it means only one thing: We will return thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons," Zelenskyy said.

Since failing to take Kyiv and other areas in Ukraine's northeast early in the war, Russia has focused on Donbas, unleashing fierce shelling and engaging in house-to-house combat that devastated cities in the region.

Russia's invasion has also devastated Ukraine's agricultural sector, disrupting supply chains of seed and fertilizer needed by Ukrainian farmers and blocking the export of grain, a key source of revenue for the country.

In its Monday intelligence report, Britain's defense ministry pointed to the Russian blockade of the key Ukrainian port of Odesa, which has severely restricted grain exports. They predicted that Ukraine's agricultural exports would reach only 35% of the 2021 total this year as a result.

As Moscow pushed its offensive across Ukraine's east, areas in western Russia came under attack Sunday in a revival of sporadic apparent Ukrainian strikes across the border. The governor of the Belgorod region in Western Russia said fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile killed four people Sunday. In the Russian city of Kursk, two Ukrainian drones were shot down, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Switzerland 'safe haven' Russia oligarchs?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-putin-switzerland-22337ad38f74d18d4dae63952a7f433e
GIST	<p>LUGANO, Switzerland (AP) — A leading Swiss nongovernmental group on Monday called out Switzerland as a "safe haven" for Russian oligarchs and as a trading hub for Russian oil, grain and coal.</p> <p>Public Eye urged the Swiss executive branch to "use all levers at its disposal to stop the financing of this inhuman aggression," in a reference to Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine that has killed thousands of people, driven millions from their homes, and rippled through world economy by driving up food and fuel prices.</p> <p>The group spoke out on the day that the Swiss president opened a conference on Ukraine's eventual recovery from Russia's war involving government officials, advocacy groups, the private sector, academia and U.N. organizations.</p>

Ignazio Cassis was hosting leaders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy by video message, at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in the bucolic lakeside town of Lugano. Swiss diplomats say the meeting aims try to map out a way forward for the world to help the war-battered country to recover and rebuild when Russia's war ends one day.

Cassis and Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, co-hosts to the meeting, welcomed a parade of envoys including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss.

The conference builds upon a multi-year, multi-country discussion about reform in Ukraine — even before the war began — but this time the focus is “recovery” from the war. Scores of Ukrainian ministers, lawmakers and others were also on hand.

Environmental groups want to help Ukraine build back better. Lobby groups Solar Power Europe and Wind Europe, together with their Ukrainian counterparts, urged Ukraine to set a target of producing at least 40% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, bringing it in line with European Union targets.

According to the International Energy Agency, Ukraine generated less than 10% of its electricity from renewable sources in 2019, the last year for which data was published. Most of Ukraine's electricity comes from nuclear power and burning coal.

A small group of Greenpeace activists staged a media stunt by pretending to set up a fake wind turbine on the banks of Lake Lugano, as part of a call with Ukrainian NGOs to support sustainable energy development in the country whose infrastructure has been widely damaged.

In its call for transparency and better regulation in Switzerland, Public Eye said that “as a safe haven for oligarchs close to the Kremlin and as a trading hub for Russian oil, grain and coal, Switzerland bears a big political responsibility.”

It said Switzerland has been over the years a “popular refuge” for Russian business magnates to park their assets. The group said firms use Switzerland as an “unregulated commodity trading hub” and exploit a lack of transparency about financial dealings in the country.

There was no immediate response from the Swiss government.

The group welcomed Switzerland's “humanitarian engagement” for Ukraine through the conference but called on the government to strictly implement international sanctions on Russian elites and their government, and better regulate its trading hub.

Switzerland is a major international financial center and its government has traditionally touted Swiss “neutrality” — which is enshrined into law — and Switzerland's role as an intermediary between hostile countries and as a host of many international and U.N. institutions.

The Swiss Bankers Association has estimated that the assets of Russian clients deposited in Switzerland's banks total 150-200 billion Swiss francs (about \$155-\$210 billion), making the country a key repository of Russian money abroad.

Switzerland, which is not a member of the EU, has largely joined the bloc's sanctions against Russia. The website of the Swiss federal economics department says that as of May 12, a total of 6.3 billion francs have been frozen in Switzerland in connection with Russia's war in Ukraine.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Sydney flood misery: 3ft rain, evacuations
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SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/floods-sydney-australia-evacuations-new-south-wales-1ad3cba6a4bfc7a21655e5867d217249
GIST	<p>SYDNEY (AP) — More than 30,000 residents of Sydney and its surrounds were told to evacuate or prepare to abandon their homes Monday as Australia’s largest city faces its fourth, and possibly worst, round of flooding in less than a year and a half.</p> <p>Days of torrential rain caused dams to overflow and waterways to break their banks, bringing a new flood emergency to parts of the city of 5 million people.</p> <p>“The latest information we have is that there’s a very good chance that the flooding will be worse than any of the other three floods that those areas had in the last 18 months,” Emergency Management Minister Murray Watt said.</p> <p>The current flooding might affect areas that were spared during the previous floods in March last year, March this year and April, Watt added.</p> <p>New South Wales state Premier Dominic Perrottet said 32,000 people were impacted by evacuation orders and warnings.</p> <p>“You’d probably expect to see that number increase over the course of the week,” Perrottet said.</p> <p>Emergency services made numerous flood rescues Sunday and early Monday and were getting hundreds more calls for help.</p> <p>Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology manager Jane Golding said some areas between Newcastle, north of Sydney, and Wollongong, south of Sydney had received more than a meter (39 inches) of rain in the previous 24 hours. Some has received more than 1.5 meters (59 inches).</p> <p>Those totals are near the average annual rainfall for coastal areas of New South Wales.</p> <p>“The system that has been generating this weather does show signs that it will ease tomorrow, but throughout today, expect more rain,” Golding said.</p> <p>Rain was forecast across New South Wales’s coast, including Sydney, all week, she said.</p> <p>The Bureau of Meteorology says up to 12 centimeters (4.7 inches) of rain could fall in Sydney on Monday.</p> <p>The flooding danger was highest along the Hawkesbury River, in northwest Sydney, and the Nepean River in Sydney’s west.</p> <p>The bureau Monday afternoon reported major flooding at the Nepean communities of Menangle and Wallacia on Sydney’s southwest fringe.</p> <p>Major flooding also occurred on the Hawkesbury at North Richmond on Sydney’s northwest edge. The Hawkesbury communities of Windsor and Lower Portland were expected to be flooded Monday afternoon and Wisemans Ferry on Tuesday, a bureau statement said.</p> <p>State Emergency Services Commissioner Carlene York said strong winds had toppled trees, damaging rooves and blocking roads. She advised against unnecessary travel.</p> <p>Off the New South Wales coast, a cargo ship with 21 crew members lost power after leaving port in Wollongong on Monday morning. It was anchored near the coast and tugboats were preparing to tug it into safer, open waters.</p>

	<p>The ship has engineers on board capable of repairing the engine, port official John Finch told reporters. “Unfortunately, we just happen to be in some atrocious conditions at the moment,” he said, describing 8-meter (26-foot) swells and winds blowing at 30 knots (34 mph).</p> <p>An earlier plan to airlift the ship’s crew to safety was abandoned because of bad weather.</p> <p>Repeated flooding was taking a toll on members of a riverside community southwest of Sydney, said Mayor Theresa Fedeli of the Camden municipality where homes and businesses were inundated by the Nepean River over Sunday night.</p> <p>“It’s just devastating. They just keep on saying ‘devastating, not again,’” Fedeli said.</p> <p>“I just keep on saying ... ‘We’ve got to be strong, we will get through this.’ But you know deep down it’s really hitting home hard to a lot of people,” she added.</p> <p>Perrottet said government and communities needed to adapt to major flooding becoming more common across Australia’s most populous state.</p> <p>“To see what we’re seeing right across Sydney, there’s no doubt these events are becoming more common. And governments need to adjust and make sure that we respond to the changing environment that we find ourselves in,” Perrottet said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Ukraine troops: eastern region is ‘hell’
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-donetsk-government-and-politics-f9f2b30b90a10b31f16aca18dae4eb65
GIST	<p>BAKHMUT, Ukraine (AP) — Torched forests and cities burned to the ground. Colleagues with severed limbs. Bombardments so relentless the only option is to lie in a trench, wait and pray.</p> <p>Ukrainian soldiers returning from the front lines in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region — where Russia is waging a fierce offensive — describe life during what has turned into a grueling war of attrition as apocalyptic.</p> <p>In interviews with The Associated Press, some complained of chaotic organization, desertions and mental health problems caused by relentless shelling. Others spoke of high morale, their colleagues’ heroism, and a commitment to keep fighting, even as the better-equipped Russians control more of the combat zone.</p> <p>Lt. Volodymyr Nazarenko, 30, second-in-command of the Ukrainian National Guard’s Svoboda Battalion, was with troops who retreated from Sievierodonetsk under orders from military leaders. During a month-long battle, Russian tanks obliterated any potential defensive positions and turned a city with a prewar population of 101,000 into “a burnt-down desert,” he said.</p> <p>“They shelled us every day. I do not want to lie about it. But these were barrages of ammunition at every building,” Nazarenko said. “The city was methodically leveled out.”</p> <p>At the time, Sievierodonetsk was one of two major cities under Ukrainian control in Luhansk province, where pro-Russia separatists declared an unrecognized republic eight years ago. By the time the order to withdraw came on June 24, the Ukrainians were surrounded on three sides and mounting a defense from a chemical plant also sheltering civilians.</p> <p>“If there was a hell on Earth somewhere, it was in Sievierodonetsk,” Artem Ruban, a soldier in Nazarenko’s battalion, said from the comparative safety of Bakhmut, 64 kilometers (40 miles) to the southwest of the since-captured city. “The inner strength of our boys allowed them to hold the city until the last moment.”</p>

“Those were not human conditions they had to fight in. It is difficult to explain this to you here, what they feel like now or what it was like there,” Ruban said, blinking in the sunlight. “They were fighting until the end there. The task was to destroy the enemy, no matter what.”

Nazarenko, who also fought in Kyiv and elsewhere in the east after Russia invaded Ukraine, considers the Ukrainian operation in Sievierodonetsk “a victory” despite the outcome. He said the defenders managed to limit casualties while stalling the Russian advance for much longer than expected, depleting Russia’s resources.

“Their army incurred huge losses, and their attack potential was obliterated,” he said.

Both the lieutenant and the soldier under his command expressed confidence that Ukraine would take back all occupied territories and defeat Russia. They insisted morale remained high. Other soldiers, most with no combat experience before the invasion, shared more pessimistic accounts while insisting on anonymity or using only their first names to discuss their experiences.

Oleksiy, a member of the Ukrainian army who started fighting against the Moscow-backed separatists in 2016, had just returned from the front with a heavy limp. He said he was wounded on the battlefield in Zolote, a town the Russians also have since occupied.

“On the TV, they are showing beautiful pictures of the front lines, the solidarity, the army, but the reality is very different” he said, adding he does not think the delivery of more Western weapons would change the course of the war.

His battalion started running out of ammunition within a few weeks, Oleksiy said. At one point, the relentless shelling kept the soldiers from standing up in the trenches, he said, exhaustion visible on his lined face.

A senior presidential aide reported last month that 100 to 200 Ukrainian troops were dying every day, but the country has not provided the total number killed in action. Oleksiy claimed his unit lost 150 men during its first three days of fighting, many from a loss of blood.

Due to the relentless bombardments, wounded soldiers were only evacuated at night, and sometimes they had to wait up to two days, he said.

“The commanders don’t care if you are psychologically broken. If you have a working heart, if you have arms and legs, you have to go back in,” he added.

Mariia, a 41-year-old platoon commander who joined the Ukrainian army in 2018 after working as a lawyer and giving birth to a daughter, explained that the level of danger and discomfort can vary greatly depending on a unit’s location and access to supply lines.

Front lines that have existed since the conflict with pro-Russia separatists began in 2014 are more static and predictable, whereas places that became battlegrounds since Russia sent its troops in to invade are “a different world,” she said.

Mariia, who refused to share her surname for security reasons, said her husband is currently fighting in such a “hot spot.” Everyone misses and worries about their loved ones, and though this causes distress, her subordinates have kept their spirits high, she said.

“We are the descendants of Cossacks, we are free and brave. It is in our blood,” she said. “We are going to fight to the end.”

Two other soldiers the AP interviewed — former office-workers in Kyiv with no prior battle experience — said they were sent to the front lines in the east as soon as they completed their initial training. They

said they observed “terrible organization” and “illogical decision-making,” and many people in their battalion refused to fight.

One of the soldiers said he smokes marijuana daily. “Otherwise, I would lose my mind, I would desert. It’s the only way I can cope” he said.

A 28-year-old former teacher in Sloviansk who “never imagined” he would fight for his country described Ukraine’s battlefields as a completely different life, with a different value system and emotional highs as well as lows.

“There is joy, there is sorrow. Everything is intertwined,” he said.

Friendship with his colleagues provide the bright spots. But he also saw fellow soldiers succumbing to extreme fatigue, both physical and mental, and displaying symptoms of PTSD.

“It’s hard to live under constant stress, sleep-deprived and malnourished. To see all those horrors with your own eyes — the dead, the torn-off limbs. It is unlikely that someone’s psyche can withstand that,” he said.

Yet he, too, insisted that the motivation to defend their country remains.

“We are ready to endure and fight with clenched teeth. No matter how hard and difficult it is,” the teacher said, speaking from a fishing store that was converted into a military distribution hub. “Who will defend my home and my family, if it is not me?”

The center in the city of Sloviansk provides local military units with equipment and provisions, and gives soldiers a place to go during brief respites from the physical grind and horrors of battle.

Tetiana Khimion, a 43-year-old dance choreographer, set up the center when the war started. All kinds of soldiers pass through, she says, from skilled special forces and war-hardened veterans to civilians-turned-fighters who signed up only recently.

“It can be like this: For the first time he comes, smiles widely, he can even be shy. The next time he comes, and there is emptiness in his eyes,” Khimion said. “He has been through something, and he is different.”

Behind her, a group of young Ukrainian soldiers on rotation from the front lines sit sharing jokes and a pizza. The thud of artillery can be heard a few miles away.

“Mostly they hope for the better. Yes, sometimes they come in a little sad, but we hope to raise their spirits here, too,” Khimion said. “We hug, we smile at each other and then they go back into the fields.”

On Sunday, Russian forces occupied the last Ukrainian stronghold in Luhansk province and stepped up rocket strikes on Donetsk, the Donbas province where the center is located.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Cosmonauts celebrate Russia victory
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-cosmonauts-celebrate-capture-ukraines-luhansk-region-space-2022-07-04/
GIST	<p>July 4 (Reuters) - Russian cosmonauts aboard the International Space Station on Monday celebrated Russia's capture of the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk, a significant milestone for Moscow in the war.</p> <p>Roscosmos, the Russian space agency, described Moscow's capture of the Luhansk region as "a liberation day to celebrate both on Earth and in space."</p>

	<p>The agency posted pictures of cosmonauts Oleg Artemyev, Denis Matveev and Sergei Korsakov smiling as they held up flags of Russia's proxies in eastern Ukraine, the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic.</p> <p>"This is a long-awaited day that the residents of the occupied areas of the Luhansk region had been waiting eight years for," Roscosmos wrote on the Telegram messaging app.</p> <p>"We are convinced that July 3, 2022, will forever remain in the history of the (Luhansk People's) Republic."</p> <p>Russia announced on Sunday that Russian and separatist forces had gained full control over the Luhansk region after capturing its last major city, Lysychansk.</p> <p>Ukraine, which has vowed to regain the lost territory, said its troops had withdrawn from their last remaining bastion in the region to save the lives of its soldiers. Kyiv said its troops would regroup to launch a counter-offensive with the help of long-range Western weapons.</p> <p>After being repelled in its initial attempt to capture the capital Kyiv in February, Russia has focused on driving Ukrainian forces out of the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Kyiv since Russia's first military intervention in Ukraine in 2014.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Russia shifts Ukraine war to Donetsk
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-withdraws-battered-lysyhansk-city-russia-claims-major-victory-2022-07-04/
GIST	<p>KYIV, July 4 (Reuters) - Russian forces in Ukraine will focus on trying to seize all of the Donetsk region, having forced Ukrainian troops to withdraw from the last major city under their control in the neighbouring Luhansk region, the governor of Luhansk said on Monday.</p> <p>After abandoning an assault on Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, during the early weeks of the war, Russia concentrated its military operation on the industrial Donbas heartland that comprises the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, where Moscow-backed separatist proxies have been fighting Ukraine since 2014.</p> <p>Russia said it had established full control over the Luhansk region after Ukrainian forces pulled out of the bombed-out city of Lysychansk.</p> <p>"In terms of the military, it is bad to leave positions, but there is nothing critical (in the loss of Lysychansk). We need to win the war, not the battle for Lysychansk," Governor Serhiy Gaidai told Reuters in an interview.</p> <p>"It hurts a lot, but it's not losing the war."</p> <p>He said the withdrawal from Lysychansk had been "centralised", indicating that it had been planned and orderly, but that Ukrainian forces had risked being surrounded.</p> <p>"Still, for them (Russian forces) goal number 1 is the Donetsk region. Sloviansk and Bakhmut will come under attack - Bakhmut has already started being shelled very hard," he said.</p> <p>Gaidai said that he expected the city of Sloviansk and the town of Bakhmut in particular to come under attack as Russia tries to take full control of the Donbas in eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>Moscow said the capture of Lysychansk less than a week after taking neighbouring Sievierdonetsk meant it had "liberated" Luhansk, a major Kremlin war goal.</p>

Moscow said it would give the captured territory to the self-proclaimed Russian-backed Luhansk People's Republic whose independence it recognised on the eve of the war.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy on Sunday night vowed to regain the lost territory with the help of long-range Western weapons.

Zelenskiy said Russia was concentrating its firepower on the Donbas front, but Ukraine would hit back with long-range weapons such as the U.S.-supplied HIMARS rocket launchers.

"The fact that we protect the lives of our soldiers, our people, plays an equally important role. We will rebuild the walls, we will win back the land, and people must be protected above all else," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address.

In Sloviansk, west of Lysychansk in Donetsk region, Mayor Vadym Lyakh wrote on Facebook that on Sunday fierce shelling had killed at least six people, including a 10-year-old girl.

COSTLY CAMPAIGN

Thousands of civilians have been killed and cities levelled since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, with Kyiv accusing Moscow of deliberately targeting civilians. Moscow denies this.

Russia says what it calls a "special military operation" in Ukraine aims to protect Russian speakers from nationalists. Ukraine and its Western allies say this is a baseless pretext for flagrant aggression that aims to seize territory.

The Ukraine war has sparked a global energy and food crisis and Western-led sanctions against Moscow have triggered the worst economic crisis in Russia since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

Germany has warned of gas shortages due to dwindling supplies from Russia. The head of its energy regulator said the 15 billion euros' (\$15.64 billion) of government credit to buy gas for storage may not be enough, according to an interview in the WirtschaftsWoche magazine on Monday. [read more](#)

While Russia would try to frame its advance in Luhansk as a significant moment in the war, it came at a high cost to Russia's military, said Neil Melvin of the London-based think tank RUSI.

"Ukraine's position was never that they could defend all of this. What they've been trying to do is to slow down the Russian assault and cause maximum damage, while they build up for a counteroffensive," he said.

Ukraine has repeatedly appealed for an acceleration in weapons supplies from the West, saying its forces are heavily outgunned.

STRIKES ON KHARKIV

Zelenskiy's office said Russian artillery strikes hit residential and farm buildings in the Kharkiv region.

Russia's defence ministry also said on Sunday it had struck the military infrastructure of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city in the northeast, where a Reuters reporter said Ukrainian forces had been building fortifications after nightly shelling.

Outside a school in Kharkiv, some residents threw debris into a large crater created by an early morning rocket strike while others got help repairing damaged houses.

"The wife was lucky that she woke up early in the morning because the roof fell exactly where she had been sleeping," one resident, Oleksii Mihulin, told Reuters.

About 70 km (44 miles) from Kharkiv on the Russian side of the border, Russia also reported explosions on Sunday in Belgorod, which it said killed at least three people and destroyed homes. [read more](#)

	<p>"The sound was so strong that I jumped up, I woke up, got very scared and started screaming," a Belgorod resident told Reuters, adding the blasts occurred around 3 a.m. (0000 GMT).</p> <p>Moscow has accused Kyiv of numerous attacks on Belgorod and other areas bordering Ukraine. Kyiv has never claimed responsibility for any of these incidents.</p> <p>Ukraine said its air force had flown some 15 sorties "in virtually all directions of hostilities", destroying equipment and two ammunition depots.</p> <p>In the Russian-occupied southern Ukrainian city of Melitopol, Ukrainian forces hit a military logistics base with more than 30 strikes on Sunday, the city's exiled mayor Ivan Fedorov said. A Russian-installed official confirmed that strikes had hit the city.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Western firms struggle to exit Russia
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/nervous-staff-no-bankers-western-firms-struggle-exit-russia-2022-07-04/
GIST	<p>HELSINKI, July 4 (Reuters) - For foreign companies still working out what to do with their stranded Russian assets, President Vladimir Putin's seizure of a major oil and gas project is a powerful warning: Move fast or else.</p> <p>Companies have been wrestling with how to exit in ways that limit the financial impact, do not put employees at risk and, in some cases, offer the opportunity to return in future.</p> <p>Finnish coffee boss Rolf Ladau was one of the early movers.</p> <p>When Western governments started slapping sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine in late February, the CEO of Paulig realised the coffee roasting business there was no longer viable.</p> <p>Coffee wasn't on sanctions lists, but it was almost impossible to get beans into Russia as freight companies stopped shipping to and from the country. Paying in roubles was getting harder.</p> <p>Two weeks into the conflict, Ladau decided Paulig would leave, and two months later it did what usually takes as long as a year - find a suitable buyer and seal a deal. In May, Paulig sold its Russian business to private Indian investor Vikas Soi.</p> <p>More than a thousand Western companies have joined a corporate exodus from Russia - unprecedented in its scale and speed - as they scramble to comply with sanctions and amid threats of retaliation from the Kremlin.</p> <p>But Paulig is one of a relatively small number that have sold assets or handed over the keys to local managers. A Reuters tally shows fewer than 40, including McDonald's (MCD.N), Societe Generale (SOGN.PA) and Renault (RENA.PA), have announced deals.</p> <p>Interviews with half a dozen executives at companies who have divested assets show the complexity and uncertainty of selling at speed and hefty discounts - and why it may be taking many so long.</p> <p>The obstacles are huge: confusion has swirled over what the Kremlin would allow foreign companies to do; staff are nervous after government threats of retaliation; sanctions have limited the pool of buyers and there is little time to check them out; sales prices have been steeply discounted; and negotiations are being done virtually because fears of reprisals make it too risky to visit Russia in person.</p> <p>With Moscow preparing a new law that is expected to come into force soon allowing it to take control of the local businesses of Western companies that decide to leave, the stakes are getting higher.</p>

"If you haven't started the process already or if you still have doubts about it, then it's going to get harder," Ladau told Reuters, speaking before Putin's swoop on the Sakhalin oil and gas project.

"Russia has no interest in letting foreign companies out of the market easily."

NO BLUEPRINT

Many Western firms have run into problems trying to leave.

Burger King halted corporate support for its Russia outlets in March, but the fast-food chain's roughly 800 restaurants are still open. Lawyers say part of the problem is the complexity of its joint venture-style franchise agreement.

UniCredit (CRDI.MI) has disposed of some assets via swaps but has had to widen the search for potential buyers to countries such as India, Turkey and China. [read more](#)

Four months in, there's little sign companies have found a blueprint for extricating themselves.

Renault sold its share of a lucrative joint venture to the Russian state for a rouble; McDonald's handed over 800 branches to a Siberian businessman for a symbolic sum; both have agreed buyback clauses.

SocGen sold its Rosbank unit to Interros Capital, a firm linked to Russian oligarch Vladimir Potanin.

Many have given the keys to local managers. Almost all have booked hefty writedowns totalling tens of billions of dollars.

Ladau decided against a buyback clause.

"The moral-ethical issues are so serious that we have no room to return to Russia," he said.

Experts say it will be tough for new owners in an increasingly isolated Russia without access to Western goods. The cost of everything from food to energy is soaring and the economy has plunged into recession.

Still, the departures have provided an unexpected windfall to firms and entrepreneurs in Russia and countries outside of sanctions, as they snap up prized assets for a bargain.

NO BANKERS

One aspect of the exodus highlights its unusual nature: the absence of bankers who would normally play a key role in deals.

Sources say banks have steered clear due to concerns about breaking sanctions.

Instead, companies are relying on lawyers in Russia and international consultants with knowledge of the country to find and vet suitors - making sure they are legitimate, not on sanctions lists and have the financial credentials.

Privately-owned Finnish food company Fazer signed a deal as early as April, selling its Russian bakery business to Moscow-based rival Kolomenskij Bakery and Confectionery Holding.

The speed belies the complications.

At first, Russia threatened to ban exits of listed foreign companies. When the company asked for clarification, its local legal advisers said it could have been a mistake.

The rules could change at any time.

"So everyone was in a terrible hurry," said Sebastian Jagerhorn, head of legal affairs and compliance.

	<p>Lara Saulo, who runs the bakery business, said even advisers in Russia gave conflicting advice along the way.</p> <p>Putin's swoop on Sakhalin on Thursday was clearer.</p> <p>"Soon they'll retaliate, not just with gas, but in other ways," said a senior executive whose company is struggling to get out.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Covid cases rise but weekly deaths down
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/03/world-coronavirus-cases-rise-7-weekly-deaths-down-4/8641656854363/
GIST	<p>July 3 (UPI) -- COVID-19 cases worldwide are spiking though nowhere near the surge during the Omicron subvariant in January with deaths among the lowest since the start of the pandemic in early 2020. Hotspots are in portions of Europe plus Mexico, Brazil and India.</p> <p>In the past week, infections rose 4,990,935 at 7% with a daily average of 712,991, according to tracking by Worldometers.info. On Jan. 25, the record was set at 3,417,955. The total through Sunday is 554,343,968.</p> <p>Meanwhile, fatalities dropped 4% for a total of 9,372 in the past week. That daily average of 1,339 is the lowest since 1,076 on March 21, 2020, 10 days after the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic. Through Sunday the total is 6,361,372, including 336,614 Sunday after 396,726 Saturday.</p> <p>Some nations do not report data on weekends. On Sunday 566 deaths were reported, the fewest since 463 March 13, with 765 Saturday and 774 last Sunday.</p> <p>Big case increases in the past week with more than 25,000 in descending order were France 32% at 614,286 with the third-most in the world, Italy 51% in fourth at 337,152, Japan 28% at 128,701 in ninth, Mexico 52% at 118,171 in 11th, Greece 48% at 100,630 in 13th, Singapore 50% at 57,865 in 18th, New Zealand 45% at 48,909 in 19th.</p> <p>The United States reported the most cases, 640,024 but a 16% drop and No.2 Germany at 621,518 with a 105 gain.</p> <p>Among nations reporting more than 100 deaths with big increases in the past week: Germany 26% in fourth at 558, India 39% in 11th at 200, Japan 83% in 13th at 190, Greece 37% in 16th at 114. Like in cases, the United States reported the most deaths, 1,911 with a 14% drop. Brazil was second with 1,520 with a 12% rise.</p> <p>Posting weekly cases increases were Europe 20% for a world-high 204,674,261, Oceania 15% for 9,909,713, South America 4% for 59,929,277. Declines were North America 8% for 105,815,533, Africa 7% for 12,345,060, Asia 5% for 161,669,392.</p> <p>Gains in deaths were: South America 8% for 1,306,064, Oceania 3% for 14,241, Europe 1% for a world-high 1,856,441. Decreases were Africa 33% for 255,986, North America 11% for 1,488,658, Asia 11% for 1,439,967.</p> <p>"This pandemic is changing but it's not over," World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said last Wednesday during a media briefing. "Our ability to track the COVID-19 virus is under threat as reporting and genomic sequences are declining meaning it is becoming harder to track Omicron and analyze future emerging variants."</p> <p>He noted cases are rising in 110 nations.</p>

"Hundreds of millions of people, including tens of millions of health workers and older people in lower-income countries remain unvaccinated, which means they are more vulnerable to future waves of the virus," the WHO chief said. "With only 58 countries hitting the 70% target, some have said it's not possible for low-income countries to make it."

In all, more than 12 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered worldwide, a gain of more than 100 million in a week, with the world's population of 7.9 billion, according to Bloomberg tracking.

Broken down by world regions, the United States and Canada have administered at least one dose to 79% of the population, the same as Latin America and Asia-Pacific with Europe at 69%, Middle East 57% and Africa at 23%, according to The New York Times tracking. The percentages didn't drop in two weeks.

Asia

The continent had 18% of the world's cases and 16.8% of the deaths in the past week but 57.8% of the population.

India's cases rose 17% over one week with 16,103 reported Sunday for a total of 43,502,429, which is second behind the United States, with 18,819 on Thursday, the most since 19,968 Feb. 19. On April 11, cases dropped to 796. The record was 414,188 on May 6, 2021.

India also reported 31 deaths for a total of 525,199, third behind the United States and Brazil. The record was 4,529 on May 18, 2021, with no adjustments from regions. Single deaths were reported in April with zero the last time on March 24, 2020.

Fueling the surge are the BA.2 sub-variant of Omicron, which ran rampant in January, along with BA.1, and another sub-variant branched off from it, called BA.2.38.

On Sunday, Taiwan reported 32,681 cases for a cumulative 3,870,528 in 34th worldwide and 88 deaths for 6,956 in 78th.

Taiwan, with a population of 23.6 million, had a national-record 94,610 cases May 27.

It set a daily deaths record of 211 on June 11.

Taiwan is officially the Republic of China and a separate nation from the People's Republic of China.

Unlike Mainland China -- around 100 miles away -- Taiwan had few cases and deaths when the pandemic emerged there in January 2020.

Mainland China, with the world's largest population at 1.5 billion, has a zero-tolerance for the virus, including in Shanghai which had been locked down for more than two months but is now allowing in-person dining and Disney Resort theme park to reopen both last week.

"Overall, the Chinese government is starting to make a balance between supporting growth and suppressing the virus spread after the strict lockdown in Shanghai," Ken Cheung, chief Asian foreign exchange strategist for Mizuho Bank, told CNN.

But he said it remains "highly uncertain" when China will reopen its borders to nonresidents.

In Mainland China, there are a total of 225,851 cases, including 104 Sunday and a gain of 225 in one week. Deaths remain unchanged at 5,226 for the past week for 88th behind Palestine with 5,356. From January 2021 until this March there were no deaths reported. At the end of last year, the death count was 4,636.

Those are confirmed cases with illness. Asymptomatic ones are reported separately in Mainland China.

Hong Kong reported 1,828 cases Sunday for a total of 1,237,877 with the record 56,827 on March 10, and no fatalities and seven in a week for a cumulative 9,405, including a record 294 on March 11. Until this year, Hong Kong, an island of 7.6 million people that has separate governing and economic systems from Communist China, had reported only 163 deaths and 243,612 cases.

North Korea, with a population of 25 million, has had cases grow to 4,752,080 in 24th worldwide, including 3,550 Sunday with the record 392,930 May 16. The one-week drop was 59%. Deaths remained at 73 for two weeks.

The first cases were reported on May 12.

South Korea reported 10,059 cases with a record 621,328 March 17. Deaths were eight with a record 470 on March 24 while the mark until this year was 109 on Dec. 23.

The nation dropped to ninth in the world behind Russia at 18,389,611 cases with only 630,748 reported through the end of last year. Deaths are 24,570 in 39th.

Elsewhere in Asia, Indonesia is ninth in deaths at 156,749, including four Sunday and 19th in cases at 5,093,917 with 1,614 Sunday. The records are 64,718 infections in February and 2,069 last July.

Iran is 11th in deaths at 141,396 with six reported Sunday.

Vietnam is down to 511 cases Sunday, a fraction of the record 203,036 in March. The nation is 12th overall in the world with 10,748,639. And deaths are 43,087 in 24th with three reported in the past week.

Turkey is 10th in cases at 15,123,331 and 19th in deaths at 99,032 with data last reported Tuesday.

Japan reported 23,299 cases and is at 9,404,529 in 14th and deaths are 31,331, a daily gain of 5.

Japan is holding off launching a tourism campaign that originally was to start this month,

"We'll respond (to the COVID-19 resurgence) with a strong sense of awareness and caution," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara told a news conference Friday. "We want to monitor the state of infections a little more."

Following is the rank order of some nations' vaccination rates in Asia: Mainland China 91.7%, Hong Kong 90.8%, Vietnam 88.7%, Singapore 88.3%, South Korea 87%, Malaysia 85.1%, Japan 82.4%, Iran 76.8%, Israel 76.6%, Indonesia 74.4%, India 73.7%, Turkey 69.2% and Philippines 69%.

Europe

Four nations are in the top 10 for deaths: Russia fourth with 381,283, including 47 Sunday, the fewest since 44 April 20, 2020; Britain seventh at 180,417 with no data every day; Italy eighth at 168,415 with 61 Sunday and France 10th at 149,485 with none reported Saturday.

Germany is 12th in deaths at 141,292 with no data on the weekend but fifth in cases at 27,839,629 including 89,336 Saturday.

Russia is fourth in cases at 18,439,759 with 3,080 Sunday.

Italy's cases are 18,768,871 in ninth overall, adding 71,947 Sunday.

Russia is lagging the world in vaccinations with 56% of its population with at least one dose of a domestic-produced vaccine, including Sputnik 5.

Two other Eastern European nations have low vaccination rates: Ukraine at 38% and Romania at 42.3%. Poland's rate is 60.1% and Czech Republic's is 65.1%.

Most nations in Europe are heavily vaccinated. In the European Union, it's 76%, including 87.6% in Spain, 85.2% in Italy, 83.6% in France, 82.9% in Denmark, Britain 79%, 77.8% in Germany, 76.8% in Austria, 73.6% in Netherlands. Britain's data is from the government.

Most European nations no longer have any travel restrictions for visitors except proof of vaccination in some places.

North America

The United States and Mexico are in the top 10 for most deaths.

The U.S. totals are 1,043,308 fatalities and 89,522,328 infections, according to Worldometers.info. The U.S. holds the world record for daily cases at 908,614 on Jan. 13.

The nation on Friday reported 109,010 cases with a seven-day moving average of 109,944, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It was 110,618 occurring May 26, the highest since 118,918 on Feb. 16. Deaths were 403 most recently and a seven-day moving average of 316.

In Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory of 3.2 million residents, there were 22,975 cases in the past week in sixth place, behind much bigger California with 129,920, Florida with 74,481, Texas with 72,987, New York with 41,966, Illinois with 27,094

Mexico is fifth in the world in deaths at 325,788 with 13 Sunday and the record 1,417 in late January a year ago. The nation's cases are 20th at 6,089,600 with 6,301 Sunday and 24,610 Saturday, the most since mid-May except for 31,216 in April far more than during that week.

The U.S. CDC last week raised Mexico to a Level 3 travel risk, the highest category.

"If you are not up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines, avoid travel to Mexico," the health agency said in its advisory. "Even if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines, you may still be at risk for getting and spreading COVID-19."

Canada's cases increased 19% in one week with no data Saturday and Sunday for 33rd with 3,946,087 The record was 55,359 in mid-January. Canada's deaths are up 2% in one week and the nation ranks 25th worldwide with 42,010 with the record 257 on Dec. 29, 2020.

Canada has low rates per million with deaths at 1,094 and cases at 102.755. The United States is at 3,115 deaths per million compared with the world at 816.0 and 267,329 U.S. cases per million and the world at 71,072.

Canada has the best one-shot vaccination rate of the three largest countries in North America at 85.701%. The United States is at 77.5% for one shot. Mexico's percentage is 69.1%.

South America

In the top 10 for most deaths are Brazil in second at 672,017 and Peru sixth with 213,551. Colombia is 13th at 140,070.

Brazil reported 79 deaths Saturday with a record 4,211 early last April. And cases were 25,549.

Brazil's deaths rose in one week 13% and cases were up 13%, which is 414,961 in fifth in the world, for a total of 32,476,920 in third. The daily record is 286,050 in early February.

Peru, with six deaths reported Sunday, has the world's highest death rate at 6,301 per million people, which is 857 more than second-place Bulgaria. The highest cases per million among countries more than 100,000: Iceland at 564,881.

In Brazil, coronavirus is killing on average two children under the age of 5 years each day, according to a study by the children's health observatory Observa Infancia. The numbers were 599 in 2020 and 840 in 2021.

"It takes speed to bring vaccine protection to babies and children, especially [when they are aged] from 6 months to 3 years," Patricia Boccolini said. "Every day that we go without a vaccine against COVID-19 for children under 5, Brazil loses two children."

Chile has the best vaccination rate on the continent at 92.5% with Argentina 90.7%, Peru 88.1%, Brazil 87.2% and Colombia at 84.2%.

Oceania

Australia reported 30,282 cases Sunday with a record of 150,702 in mid-January and a 9% weekly increase with 216,141, the seventh highest in the world. Until the Omicron surge, the record was 2,688 on Oct. 14. Overall, the nation is at 15th in cases with 8,225,124.

Deaths are 10,014, including 30 more Sunday. On Jan. 28, it set a daily record with 134.

At the start of the year there were 2,353 deaths.

"We've seen overseas that there is a greater risk of reinfection, so if you have had COVID earlier this year in the first wave over summer, there is a risk that you are open to reinfection," Health Minister Mark Butler said Friday in a media briefing. "I do encourage you to go out and get that booster that will provide further protection against the possibility of reinfection with these new subvariants over the coming months."

Australia's one-shot vaccination rate is 87% with New Zealand at 84.4%.

In New Zealand, cases rose by 48,909 in one week, including 5,174 Sunday, with the nation of 5 million people reporting only a few hundred cases a day before the Omicron variant, including a record 216 at the time on Nov. 24. New Zealand's total is 1,357,862 with the record 24,106 March 2.

The nation added 11 deaths for a total of 1,505 with 68 at the start of March.

Africa

South Africa, where the Omicron variant first emerged worldwide on Nov. 24, reported a 35% weekly deaths decrease and 51% drop in cases.

Overall, South Africa has reported 3,995,291 cases, in 31st worldwide, with 226 Sunday. The record was 37,875 during the Omicron surge.

The nation is 18th in deaths at 101,812, including one Sunday.

South Africa's vaccination rate is only 38.9% with Egypt at 50% and Tunisia at 60.8%.

Tunisia has the second-most deaths on the continent with 28,691, with data last reported Tuesday, ahead of Egypt with 24,613 with data last reported April 15.

Africa's new concern is monkeypox, which is afflicted 1,821 in Africa.'

"To improve understanding of how the virus is spreading across countries and continents, WHO is also supporting countries to capitalize on the improved genomic sequencing capacity built during the COVID-19 pandemic, to sequence the monkeypox virus," WHO Regional Director for Africa Dr. Matshidiso Moeti said during a media briefing last week.

HEADLINE	07/04 Australia PM visits Kyiv; offers assistance
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/04/ukraine-Australian-prime-minister-weapons-package/2551656923160/
GIST	<p>July 4 (UPI) -- During a visit to the war-torn capital of Kyiv, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced an additional package of military assistance for Ukraine and further punitive measures targeting Russia.</p> <p>The new leader of the island nation was in Kyiv on Sunday in a show of support for Ukraine and for talks with President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has been calling on allies for more and heavier weaponry to fend off Russia's military.</p> <p>According to both governments, Canberra on Sunday pledged an additional \$68 million worth of military assistance to Ukraine, including 14 armored personnel carries, 20 Bushmaster vehicles and other equipment as well as drones.</p> <p>"Australia is ready to continue providing support to the Ukrainian state and its people for as long as it takes for Ukraine to gain an advantage and protect the law and order in which we all exist," Albanese said during a press conference with Zelensky.</p> <p>The newly announced weaponry increases Australia's total military assistance to Ukraine to about \$266 million since the war began in late February.</p> <p>Canberra has also agreed to assist Ukraine's Border Guard Service with \$6 million so it can upgrade its management equipment, improve cybersecurity and enhance border operations.</p> <p>Albanese also announced duty free access for Ukrainian imports to Australia and a commitment to intervene at the International Court of Justice in support of Kyiv's case of war crimes committed by Russia.</p> <p>Australia also blacklisted 16 Russian ministers and oligarchs with sanctions and travel bans and said it will join Britain, Canada, Japan, the United States and others in banning the import of Russian gold.</p> <p>With the additions announced Sunday, Australia has sanctioned 843 people and 62 entities amid Russia's war, Albanese said.</p> <p>During his trip to Kyiv, Albanese also visited Bucha, Irpin and Hostomel -- Ukrainian cities that have been devastated by the war and which officials point to as evidence of Kremlin war crimes.</p> <p>Zelensky said Ukraine thanks Australia for its commitments to its defense while calling for greater international efforts to hold Russia to account.</p> <p>"We must strengthen international cooperation in order to break Russia's aggressive potential," he said, according to a statement from his office. "We must increase the sanctions pressure on the aggressor."</p> <p>Albanese's trip to Ukraine is the first by an Australian prime minister in the history of relations between the two countries.</p> <p>Zelensky told his Canberra counterpart that he wished it could have occurred during peacetime.</p> <p>"But we appreciate and are grateful for your presence here with us at this time of Russia's war against the Ukrainian people," he said.</p> <p>Since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, democratic nations have announced various punitive measures targeting Russia. They have also promised to arm Ukraine in its fight.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Rainbow Family comes to Colorado
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/03/rainbow-family-colorado/
GIST	<p>ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST, Colo. — High up in the forest-fringed meadow, there were hundreds of tents, many guitars and drums, a bit of nudity, whiffs of marijuana, vigorous vegetable-chopping, many hugs and a very, very long line for burritos.</p> <p>In the towns below, there was no small amount of angst about what was happening up above.</p> <p>The Rainbow Family, which bills itself as “the largest non-organization of non-members in the world” and each year descends on a national forest for one week of hippie-tinged communing with nature and prayers for peace, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It announced in mid-June that it had chosen a remote spot of Routt County in northwest Colorado, the state where it first came together in 1972, for a gathering that began Friday and is expected to attract 10,000 people.</p> <p>This one-with-the-land ethos was not exactly welcomed locally in an era of climate change and extinction. At the mere rumor that the group might choose the location where gatherings began five decades ago, in a neighboring county, commissioners there issued a statement saying, essentially: Don’t. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife department on Friday called on attendees to “respect our great outdoors.” Social media filled with locals fretting about the gathering. The newspaper in Steamboat Springs ran columns by environmentalists criticizing the selection of the site, host of a massive elk herd and sandhill crane nests, in a drought-stricken state traumatized by recent devastating wildfires.</p> <p>And even as attendees flocked here for peace, authorities set up a roadside federal court to judge their alleged missteps.</p> <p>“It’s basically a city” arriving at a biodiversity hotspot, said Michelle Stewart, executive director of the Yampa Valley Sustainability Council, a local organization. “If the Rainbows want to focus and center on prayer for world peace, then do it in a place where that’s the only thing happening, not tons of environmental impacts.”</p> <p>But in a nation that often seems to be divided in two, the Rainbow Gathering’s half-century assembly told a story of many Americas. The U.S. Forest Service, which has repeatedly emphasized that the gathering is unauthorized, works with the Rainbow Family on-site cleanup. The event, though leaderless and disheveled, is highly organized and includes a fire watch that counsels participants about fire safety. Attendees skew left but probably also include a few “Trumpsters” and QAnon devotees, said one longtime camper. The era’s political divisions, in any case, did not dominate conversations.</p> <p>“You have the whole continuum of people,” said Ray, 70, who on Friday was pulling a 100-pound cart of supplies up the 1.5-mile trail from a parking area to what is known as the Main Meadow, site of communal dinners and the event’s pinnacle, a July Fourth silent peace prayer and meditation. He did not want his full name published.</p> <p>Ray said he attended the first gathering in 1972 and had been to at least 35 since, though he skipped the last two years, which were smaller and somewhat splintered over disagreements about the wisdom of gathering during a pandemic. Now, he said, he wanted to pass the torch to younger Rainbows — and continue making a point.</p> <p>“There’s also politics here. The right of the people of America, United States, to gather peacefully — that’s supposed to be a right — on the people’s land ... To practice spiritual belief, freedom of religion,” said Ray, a retired health-care worker from southern Oregon. “To assert those rights at a time when, in my view, fascism’s grip is getting tighter and tighter and tighter.”</p> <p>The Rainbow Family insists that because it is leaderless, no one can sign an application for a permit, which the Forest Service requires for gatherings of more than 74 people. Though the agency has occasionally ticketed attendees for not having a permit, it has generally come to an uneasy truce with the</p>

Rainbows, rooted in the tacit acknowledgment that the agency cannot physically stop a huge gathering on public land without risking a dangerous confrontation.

Instead, the Forest Service has again mobilized a “national incident management team,” something it does for crises like forest fires. A Rainbow Gathering incident commander was appointed, and 40 federal law enforcement officers have been assigned to the event.

“We’re managing the event. We’re not endorsing it, by any means,” Russell Harris, now in his fourth year as incident commander, said at a virtual public meeting last month. But, he added: “In general, they work with us well with protecting the resources. And they are very good at rehabilitation.”

Routt County, meanwhile, stood up an emergency operations center, dedicated a dispatch line to the event, and was trying to staff an additional ambulance so the tiny town closest to the gathering wouldn’t be without one if its sole vehicle were sent up the mountain. Ryan Hess, the mayor of Craig — another town en route to the gathering — said staff placed dumpsters and portable toilets around town to prevent Rainbow travelers from overwhelming public ones. But so far, things had been “pretty seamless,” said Hess, who is also a sheriff’s deputy.

That was echoed by Routt County Commissioner Tim Corrigan, who said locals were upset in part because a 2006 Rainbow Gathering in another part of the county left bad memories of trash, dumpster diving and trespassing in Steamboat Springs. This time, he stressed to constituents, both the Forest Service and the county were better prepared.

“Counties have zero authority over what takes place on federal lands, so really we were not in a position to permit or not permit this event,” Corrigan said.

At the gathering, attendees greeted each other with “Welcome Home.” Social media battles over their presence were no worry; there was no cell service. Handwritten signs exhorted people to pack out trash, camp at least 100 feet from streams and stay out of ponds to protect endangered boreal toads. Campers showed off water filtration systems, temporary bridges and slit latrines, covered in lime and soil and serviced by Rainbows who — in the lingo unique to the community — “plugged in” to that camp job, or “focalized” on it.

A longtime Rainbow and unofficial guide who goes by Circus Maximus said he plugged into fire watch at the 1998 gathering in Arizona and was back, after living abroad, for his first in 10 years. He wanders the camp, reminding people that personal fires are discouraged, and that a shovel and bucket of water must be near all communal fires. (The Forest Service said conditions this year did not warrant a fire ban in the area.)

“When it comes to that sort of stuff, it’s not a police force,” said Maximus, wearing a black cowboy hat and carrying a Pulaski fire tool. “It’s a please force.”

The gathering is organized around large camps and communal kitchens that serve coffee, tea and food. No money is exchanged. At a trading post, kids and adults bartered for jewelry, stones, glass pipes and Snickers. A painted rainbow was being erected over the “Granola Funk” stage in the meadow, where a musical, a gong show and other performances would take place. At the Christian-themed Jesus Kitchen, one attendee said the nondenominational gatherings had made him a believer.

“I’d never seen Christians do it the way these guys do it,” said Gavin Boyd, 25, a carpenter from Fort Collins, Colo. It was, he said, less orthodoxy and more spirituality.

Below him was stirringly gorgeous meadow, cut by a flowing creek and new paths trod by campers. At the start of the trail, a sea of vehicles were parked atop a field quilted in Mules Ears, which resemble mini-sunflowers. Mountain bluebirds occasionally flew by. What couldn’t be seen were the recently-born elk calves that might be disturbed by the commotion, said Larry Desjardin, board president of Keep Routt Wild, a conservation group.

Desjardin circulated a petition last month urging the Forest Service to halt the gathering, calling it a serious risk to wildlife, soil, water and trees. But Desjardin said he also saw something more disturbing than a threat to nature, comparing the event to far-right extremists' occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2016.

"Everyone is a public land owner. That's something we should all be proud about," he said. "But there's a lot of entitlement with people saying, 'I should get access anywhere and anytime I want.'"

The Forest Service, in a nod to the concerns, closed off a large section of the forest south of the gathering.

Maximus, the longtime Rainbow, said similar objections surround every gathering.

"Oh, I've got a really important reason why you shouldn't do it here. Not in my backyard!" he said, describing the complaints. "Our goal is to do everything we can to lessen the impact and stay here and replant and restore things."

Nearby, Rainbows sang a Simon and Garfunkel song around a fire, and culture clashes seemed far away.

But they had been front and center that morning, down the road from the parking area. There, a magistrate judge from Denver presided over a makeshift federal courtroom in a dirt lot. The defendants were about 100 people who had been ticketed for misdemeanors — a tactic Rainbows likened to harassment.

"Have you ever been in a more beautiful courtroom?" judge Michael E. Hegarty, flanked by security officers, said to a group on the other side of yellow police tape. He wore a black robe; many of the defendants were barefoot.

Several there said they'd been pulled over for minor reasons — an air freshener hanging from the rearview mirror, a bike rack blocking the license plate — then cited for possession of marijuana, something they figured was allowed in Colorado, where recreational use is legal. It's not legal, to their dismay, on federal land.

Shortly before, a gathering participant who said he was an attorney told the group that it was a "kangaroo court," and that federal law enforcement used the event as "training" because "we are docile."

"They're just trying to do their job," Hegarty said of law enforcement. "You guys are trying to enjoy nature and fellowship with one another. And that's all good. And sometimes those things collide."

Julie Bray and Shanda Johnson spent two days at the gathering, before its official start. It was the Texans' first time, and they described themselves as unprepared for the nighttime cold — and for the laws. When a federal cop pulled them over and asked if they had cannabis, Johnson said, they confidently said, "Yes, it's Colorado, yes!"

Now they were at the court, and they planned to leave after their proceedings. Still, the gathering lived up to their expectations, they said.

"I read an article, and it said there was a group of people from different walks of life — hippies and bikers and Jesus freaks, and I just thought, 'Oh my God, that's where I want to go!'" said Johnson, 37, a massage therapist in Abilene. "But I'm done."

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HEADLINE	07/03 Russia claims control eastern Donbas area
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-claims-control-of-luhansk-as-ukrainian-forces-retreat-from-lysychnsk-11656851582?mod=hp_lead_pos9

GIST

Russian forces have captured Lysychansk, the last major Ukrainian stronghold in Luhansk, effectively placing under Russian control the [eastern region at the center of the war](#) in recent months.

Russia's defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, told President [Vladimir Putin](#) on Sunday that Russian forces, together with militia from the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, had established full control over Luhansk, Russia's Ministry of Defense reported.

A Ukrainian official confirmed that their troops were withdrawing from Lysychansk to avoid being surrounded.

Russia's declared capture of Luhansk, after months of grueling battle, signals a victory for Moscow and demonstrates how the tide of the war has shifted since March.

After [failing to take Kyiv](#) in the first month of the invasion and pulling out of central Ukraine, Russian forces have concentrated on taking the eastern Donbas area, which comprises Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk.

Russian defense officials said the total area captured in recent days was 182 square kilometers, around 70 square miles. Russia would likely next push toward Siversk, Slovyansk and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

Still, Russian progress in Donbas has been slow and [has come at enormous cost](#). Though Moscow put forces in other regions into a defensive posture to concentrate on taking Donbas, it still took months to establish full control of Luhansk.

"They are suffering significant losses, but they are stubbornly advancing," Serhiy Haidai, the Ukrainian governor of Luhansk, wrote on Telegram Sunday. He disputed the claim that Russia had complete control of Luhansk, saying that a Russian attack on Bilohorivka, a small settlement a few miles from Lysychansk, had been repulsed.

The Ukrainian forces' retreat from Lysychansk is in line with the strategy they have adopted in recent weeks of holding on as long as possible in the hopes of bleeding Russian forces, then carrying out fighting withdrawals.

Mr. Haidai said the assault on Lysychansk had been even more brutal than [the weekslong battle for Severodonetsk](#), which left that city almost entirely destroyed.

"If in Severodonetsk there were surviving houses and administrative buildings during a month of street fighting, then in Lysychansk the same administrative buildings were completely destroyed in a short period of time," Mr. Haidai wrote on Telegram on Sunday.

The announcement of the capture of Lysychansk came as each side blamed the other for a series of cross-border strikes, several of them deadly.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Ukrainian forces had carried out a deliberate strike using Tochka-U ballistic missiles with cluster munitions and drones on residential areas in Russia's western regions of Belgorod and Kursk.

Gen. Konashenkov told a briefing that Russian air defenses shot down two Ukrainian drones that were aiming to strike Kursk before they could inflict any casualties.

Russian air-defense systems also destroyed three Tochka-U ballistic missiles with cluster warheads that he said were launched at residential areas of Belgorod. Wreckage of one of the missiles fell on a residential building in the city, he said.

Vyacheslav Gladkov, Belgorod's governor, said at least four people were killed.

Some 50 buildings were damaged, including apartment blocks and private residential homes, of which five were partially destroyed, Mr. Gladkov said.

Belgorod, which sits less than 20 miles from Ukraine's war-ravaged city of Kharkiv, has been [the site of sporadic strikes](#) in recent months, including on a fuel depot.

Roman Starovoit, Kursk's governor, accused Ukraine of launching the attack on his city as "an attempt to intimidate the civilian population," he wrote on Telegram. He posted photos on Telegram of the wreckage of what he said were the downed drones.

Ukrainian officials didn't immediately comment on the strikes in Belgorod and Kursk. In the past, they have denied responsibility for attacks in Russian territory, including the April blast at the Belgorod oil depot.

Later on Sunday, Russia hit Slovyansk and Kramatorsk—two of the main Ukrainian-controlled cities in Donetsk—with a series of rockets, according to Ukrainian officials.

Tetyana Ignatchenko, a spokeswoman for the Donetsk region, told a Ukrainian public news site that at least six people had been killed and 15 wounded in the strikes on Slovyansk, adding that it was dangerous for civilians to remain in the region. The city's mayor said on Telegram that the attack was the largest in recent weeks and had set off at least 15 fires.

Oleksandr Honcharenko, the mayor of Kramatorsk, wrote on Facebook that there were no known casualties, but significant damage had been done to the city.

The incidents followed a strike on Saturday in Slovyansk that killed four people and injured seven, an assault that Ukrainian officials say is part of a new Russian strategy to terrorize the country into submission.

"The Russian army continued to fire missiles at our cities," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a video message late Saturday night. "As of the evening alone, there have already been six missile strikes, a total of 12 missiles."

Russia has denied that it intentionally targets civilian infrastructure and has accused Kyiv of placing potential military targets in or near residential areas.

Also on Sunday, Alexei Selivanov, deputy head of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Russian-controlled parts of southeastern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, reported a nighttime strike on the city of Melitopol.

Mr. Selivanov claimed that the attack was carried out with long-range multiple-launch rocket systems supplied to Ukraine by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

"This is evidenced by the nature of the shelling," he wrote on Telegram. "The use of foreign weapons in civilian cities makes the U.S. and NATO accomplices in a terrorist war."

Ukrainian officials didn't directly comment on the strike Sunday morning, though Mr. Zelensky said that Ukrainian forces "continue to put pressure in the south of our country." No casualties were reported.

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HEADLINE	07/03 Day 130 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/03/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-130-of-the-invasion

GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia claims it has taken full control of Lysychansk, the eastern Ukraine city that had become Ukraine's last major stronghold in the Luhansk region. The defence ministry reportedly made the announcement on Sunday, after initially stating the area had been encircled. • Ukraine's defence ministry has denied the claims, saying that the city was not under "full control" of Russia. But spokesman Yuriy Sak added that if the entire Donbas region were to fall, it would not be "game over" for Ukraine. • It comes after an adviser to Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the loss of Ukraine's last large bastion in Luhansk was "indeed a threat". Oleksiy Arestovych added: "I do not rule out any one of a number of outcomes here. Things will become much more clear within a day or two." • Former British army chief Lord Dannatt said "meaningful negotiations" could arise out of Russia potentially taking full control of Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk provinces. His comments came before the Russian defence ministry reportedly claimed to have taken full control of Lysychansk, the last major Ukrainian stronghold in the region. • At least three people were killed and dozens of residential buildings damaged in the Russian city of Belgorod on Sunday, the region's governor said, after reports of several blasts in the city near the Ukrainian border. Vyacheslav Gladkov said at least 11 apartment buildings and 39 residential houses were damaged, including five houses destroyed. Reuters was not able to independently verify the reports and there was no immediate reaction from Ukraine. Gladkov said earlier on the Telegram messaging app: "Reasons for the incident are being investigated. Presumably, the air defence system worked." • The president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has claimed Ukraine attempted to strike military facilities on Belarusian territory. Reuters, citing the state-run Belta news agency, reported that Lukashenko said – without providing evidence – that Ukrainian armed forces tried to strike facilities in Belarus three days ago but the missiles were intercepted. He claimed Ukraine was attempting to provoke Belarus but his country did not plan to intervene in the conflict. • Rescue workers have recovered as many as 29 body fragments amid the rubble of deadly Russian missile strikes on a shopping centre in the Ukrainian city of Kremenchuk, Ukraine's state emergency service said. At least 19 people were killed on Monday after two Russian X-22 cruise missiles hit a crowded shopping centre in Kremenchuk, officials said. • The British government has condemned the exploitation of prisoners of war as two more British men held by Russian proxies in east Ukraine and charged with "mercenary activities" could face the death penalty. Andrew Hill of Plymouth and Dylan Healy of Huntingdon were reported to have been charged with "forcible seizure of power" and undergoing "terrorist" training, according to a state news agency in Russian-controlled Donetsk. • A series of recent assassination attempts targeting pro-Russian officials suggests a growing resistance movement against Russian-backed authorities occupying parts of southern Ukraine, according to US officials. The resistance could grow into a wider counterinsurgency that would pose a significant challenge to Russia's ability to control captured Ukrainian territories, CNN cited officials as saying. • Demonstrators took to the streets in Berlin to demand that the German government not intervene in the war in Ukraine. Germany has offered support to Ukraine in its fight against Russia, sending billions in military aid and heavy weapons.
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HEADLINE	07/03 DHS chief defends border efforts
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/3/homeland-security-chief-defends-border-efforts-aft/
GIST	<p>Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas on Sunday defended inspections at the U.S.-Mexico border, but he struggled to explain how a truck got through a checkpoint packed with dozens of migrants who died in the Texas heat.</p> <p>Mr. Mayorkas, touring the morning talk shows, said a criminal investigation is underway and described smuggling organizations as highly sophisticated.</p> <p>"These are very sophisticated transnational criminal organizations," Mr. Mayorkas told CBS' "Face the Nation." "Can a truck get through — through sophisticated means? Sometimes, yes."</p>

More than 50 migrants died in the truck found Monday on a country road in San Antonio.

The fatalities marked one of the worst tragedies in border history and ignited a search for answers to the growing migrant death toll under President Biden.

Mr. Mayorkas said 10,000 to 14,000 vehicles pass through the Laredo checkpoint each day but he could not say how this truck made it through.

“I think the facts are still under investigation, it’s a criminal case,” he told ABC’s “This Week.”

Mr. Mayorkas defended border inspections generally, saying officials stopped hundreds of vehicles and rescued more than 10,000 migrants in fiscal 2022 alone.

Yet the southern border has set records for chaos under Mr. Biden, who reversed several get-tough policies of the Trump administration.

Illegal migration quickly soared and has remained at a record pace in the 17 months since Inauguration Day, defying Mr. Biden’s insistence that the numbers were seasonal and nothing out of the ordinary.

Mr. Mayorkas on Sunday implored migrants not to make the perilous journey north.

“They put their lives, their life savings, in the hands of these exploitative organizations, these criminal organizations that do not care for their lives and only seek to make a profit,” Mr. Mayorkas told CBS.

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HEADLINE	07/02 Thousands of flights delayed, canceled
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/02/business/july-4-weekend-air-travel.html
GIST	<p>Travelers across the country faced the prospect of canceled or delayed flights on Saturday as airlines and airports dealt with a combination of high demand, bad weather and staffing shortages.</p> <p>As of Saturday night, nearly 650 flights in the United States had been canceled and more than 5,200 flights within, into or out of the country had been delayed, according to the flight tracking website FlightAware.</p> <p>While the number of problem flights was higher than on a typical travel day, travel demand was also higher. According to the Transportation Security Administration, the number of travelers over the Fourth of July holiday weekend had reached prepandemic levels. Travel demand over the same holiday weekend last year had substantially recovered from pandemic lows but was still below this year’s levels.</p> <p>FlightAware data showed that the three airports in the United States most affected by cancellations and delays on Saturday were Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and Kennedy Airport and Newark Liberty International Airport in the New York area.</p> <p>The number of canceled and delayed flights was far below the levels over this past Christmas and New Year’s holidays, when bad weather and Omicron-related staff shortages wreaked havoc with airline schedules.</p> <p>Still, the airlines are scrambling to keep up with demand this July 4 holiday, as they struggle with a pilot shortage, weather conditions and air traffic control delays.</p> <p>“Delta teams continue to safely manage through the compounding factors of inclement weather and air traffic control delays, which impact available flight crew duty time,” a Delta Air Lines spokesman said in an email. “Canceling a flight is always our last resort, and we sincerely apologize to our customers for any disruption to their travel plans.”</p>

	<p>Delta said it was offering customers the ability to reschedule flights from July 1 through July 4 with no fare change if they are traveling between the same origin and destination.</p> <p>United Airlines also blamed weather and air traffic control programs for its delays.</p> <p>Adding to the stress at American Airlines was a computer glitch in its pilot trip trading system that, the airline said, allowed some trip trading that “shouldn’t have been permitted.” But American said it did not “anticipate any operational impact because of this issue” and added that the “primary drivers of delays/cancellations” on Saturday were “weather and traffic control issues.”</p> <p>The Federal Aviation Administration said the top cause of the flight delays and cancellations was weather conditions followed by travel demand. The agency added in a statement: “The F.A.A. has acted on the issues raised by airlines, and is working with them to share information to keep aircraft moving safely when weather and other airspace events constrain capacity. The agency also has added alternate routes and placed more controllers in high demand areas, and increased data sharing.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 War crimes investigators in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/03/world/europe/ukraine-war-crimes-russia.html
GIST	<p>KOROPY, Ukraine — Four men tugged at long strips of fabric to lift a coffin out of the gaping hole in the backyard of a small house. They flung the lid open to reveal the moldy corpse of Oleksiy Ketler, who had been killed instantly by shrapnel when a mortar fell on the road in Koropy, a village outside Khavkiv in northeastern Ukraine, in March.</p> <p>Mr. Ketler, a father of two young children, would have celebrated his 33rd birthday on June 25, if he had not been outside his house at the wrong time. Now, his body has become another exhibit in Ukraine’s wide-ranging effort to collect evidence to prosecute Russia and its military for war crimes in the brutal killings of Ukrainian civilians.</p> <p>Experts say the process is proceeding with extraordinary speed and may become the biggest effort in history to hold war criminals to account. But it faces an array of formidable challenges.</p> <p>For one, the investigations are being undertaken even as the war rages in the east. As the investigators examined Mr. Ketler’s body, the booms of incoming and outgoing shelling thundered nearby. Ukrainian helicopters, most likely bringing new troops to the front line, flew low overhead.</p> <p>Also, although investigators from inside and outside Ukraine are all collecting evidence, there is little coordination. And despite the influx of experts, “there are really not enough people” to investigate, indict and judge the cases, said Andrey Kravchenko, the region’s deputy prosecutor, who was sitting in his office in downtown Kharkiv as the sound of outgoing shelling seemed to grow closer.</p> <p>One building that prosecutors had been using as an office was struck by missiles in what Mr. Kravchenko believed was an intentional attack, and now his team changes its headquarters often.</p> <p>Demand for accountability is strong.</p> <p>Ukraine’s judicial system is now almost wholly devoted to investigating war crimes, with most of its 8,300 prosecutors fanned out across the country collecting evidence, said Yuriy Belousov, Ukraine’s chief war crimes prosecutor.</p> <p>Ukrainian courts have already handed down six guilty sentences to Russian soldiers. Ukraine’s top prosecutor said this past week that almost 20,000 more cases — involving accusations of torture, rape, execution-style killings and the deportation of what Mr. Belousov said could be tens of thousands of Ukrainians to Russia — were being investigated.</p>

At the same time, hundreds of international experts, investigators and prosecutors have descended on Ukraine from an alphabet soup of international agencies.

Early in the war, the top prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, arrived in Ukraine with several dozen investigators. But the court, which is based in the Netherlands, tries a limited number of cases, and usually seeks to prosecute only the upper echelon of political and military leaders.

It is also slow: Investigators working on the 2008 Russian-Georgian war did not apply for arrest warrants until this year.

There are a number of other initiatives, too. Amal Clooney, an international human rights lawyer, is part of a team advising the Ukrainian government on bringing international legal action against Russia. The United Nations has started a commission to investigate human rights violations in Ukraine — with three human rights experts — but cannot establish a formal tribunal because Russia wields veto power on the U.N. Security Council.

Investigators in Poland are collecting testimonies from refugees who fled there to feed to Ukrainian prosecutors. France has sent mobile DNA analysis teams to embed with the Ukrainian authorities to collect evidence. Nongovernmental organizations based in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, are going to territories recently occupied by Russian soldiers to collect witness statements.

The involvement of multiple countries and organizations does not necessarily lead to a more productive investigation, said Wayne Jordash, a British criminal lawyer who lives in Ukraine. Mr. Jordash, who is part of an international task force supporting Ukrainian prosecutors, was critical of some of the efforts to assist Ukraine judicially, describing it as “smoke and mirrors,” without results and clear priorities.

The International Criminal Court's investigators were only just getting going, he noted, and experts from other countries have also been cycling in for stints of several weeks.

“You can't just parachute into an investigation for two weeks and expect it to be meaningful,” Mr. Jordash said.

Iva Vukusic, a scholar of post-conflict justice at the University of Utrecht, said, “Resources are being poured in, but maybe down the line we will see that they were not being spent the right way,” for instance, duplicating investigation efforts rather than providing psychosocial support to victims.

Ms. Vukusic pointed out the large size of the endeavor. Across the country, she said, “there are thousands of potential suspects, and thousands of potential trials.” All of the material needs to be properly marshaled and analyzed, she said.

“If you have 100,000 items — videos, statements, documents — if you don't know what you're sitting on, it limits the use of material,” Ms. Vukusic said.

She also cautioned that the International Criminal Court's leadership could face criticism by collaborating too closely with the Ukrainian authorities because, she said, Ukraine was also “an actor in this war.”

She feared Ukrainian officials were setting expectations for justice very high, and possibly wasting scarce resources on absentia trials.

“No big case is going to be finished in two years or five years because of the scale of the violence and the fact it is going on for so long,” she said.

Mr. Belousov, the Ukrainian war crimes prosecutor, acknowledged as much. “We are playing a long game,” he said. Even if the perpetrator is tried and convicted in absentia, Mr. Belousov said, “We understand in a year, or two or three or five, these guys won't be able to avoid punishment.”

Mr. Belousov said that he appreciated the international assistance but that coordinating it was the “biggest challenge” law enforcement authorities experienced.

For example, the Kharkiv prosecutors used a shiny new forensic investigation kit donated by the European Union for their exhumation in Koropy, the village in northeast Ukraine. But a police officer from a unit in Dmytrivka, a 45-minute drive west of Kyiv, said they had not seen or met with any international investigators or received any equipment from them.

Mr. Belousov said Ukraine wanted to take the lead in prosecuting the cases — a divergence from previous post-conflict situations in which the national authorities initially left the process to international tribunals.

But most Ukrainian investigators have little experience in these kinds of inquiries.

For example, Andriy Andriychuk, who joined the police force in the region west of Kyiv two years ago, said his work previously involved investigating local disputes or livestock theft. Now it involves “a lot more corpses,” he said.

On a recent sunny afternoon, he was called to a wooded area near the town of Dmytrivka. Several days before, police officers had received a call from foresters who had come upon a man’s grave. The dead man, Mykola Medvid, 56, had been buried with his passport; his hat was hung on top of a cross made out of sticks.

His daughter and his cousin identified his body. The local morgue officially established the cause of death: a fatal shot in the chest.

Since then, his daughter Mariia Tremalo has not heard from the investigators. No witnesses have come forward, and it was unclear who might have killed her father, or why. Still, she is hungry for justice.

“My father will never be returned,” she said. “But I would like the perpetrators to be punished.”

Right now that seems all but impossible.

In Koropy, the village near Kharkiv, Mr. Ketler’s mother, Nadezhda Ketler, was inconsolable as the gravediggers and inspectors worked. She wandered down the road to another part of her property. Six officials stood over her son’s body, photographing and documenting as his best friend, Mykhailo Mykhailenko, who looked petrified and smelled of stale alcohol, identified him.

The next day, Mr. Ketler’s body was taken to the city’s morgue, where the final cause of death was established.

Eventually, Ms. Ketler gathered the strength to show investigators the crater made by the bomb that killed him, leading the police to the exact spot where he died. Ms. Ketler stood looking at the trees as they rustled in the wind. She did not speak to anyone. She said she did not know if a guilty verdict in a war crimes trial, if it ever came, would ease the pain of losing her child.

“I had to bury my son twice,” Ms. Ketler said later. “You understand, this is hard enough to do once, and to have to do it a second time. The pain of a mother will not go anywhere.”

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HEADLINE	07/03 Ukraine forces withdraw last city key region
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/03/europe/russia-ukraine-luhansk-lysyhansk-intl/index.html
GIST	(CNN)Russia has taken control of Lysychansk, the last city in the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine that was still under Ukrainian control.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to President [Vladimir Putin](#) that the military had taken over Lysychansk and a number of nearby settlements on Sunday, according to the country's Ministry of Defense.

Ukraine's military announced Sunday that it had been "forced to withdraw" from the critical city.

Luhansk is one of the two regions that form Donbas, the eastern part of Ukraine where the conflict between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists started in 2014. The area has become the key centerpiece of Putin's military ambition in Ukraine after his troops [failed to take over Kyiv](#) earlier this year.

The fall of Lysychansk shifts Russia closer to achieving the goal of taking over Donbas.

"After heavy fighting for Lysychansk, the Defense Forces of Ukraine were forced to withdraw from their occupied positions and lines," the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Sunday on Twitter.

Accompanying the announcement was a photo that read: "Lysychansk: We'll be back."

A Facebook post by the Ukrainian military also cited Russian superiority in weapons, ammunition and personnel in the battle for the city.

"We continue the fight. Unfortunately, steel will and patriotism are not enough for success - material and technical resources are needed," that post read.

Pro-Russia separatists in the area had already claimed a victory in the battle over Lysychansk.

Leonid Pasechnik, the leader of the Russian-backed self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), declared the Luhansk region "liberated."

"Today is the day we have accomplished what we all have been striving to for eight long years. Today our troops, with the support of the Russian armed forces, liberated the town of Lysychansk, thus completing the liberation of the Republic within its historic borders," Pasechnik said.

Only Russia and Syria recognize the LPR as independent. Ukraine and its western allies consider it part of the Ukrainian territory, currently under Russian occupation.

Video shared by Russian state news outlet Ria Novosti on Saturday purports to show residents installing the old Soviet Union flag at the Memorial to the Memory of the Fallen in Lysychansk.

The Institute for the Study of War said Russia will likely establish control over the remaining territory of Luhansk region in coming days. After that, the institute said in its latest update, Russian troops will likely focus on Ukrainian positions in Siversk, west of Lysychansk, before turning inland to Sloviansk and Bakhmut.

The Donetsk region military administration said Sunday that Russian forces continued shelling Sloviansk and Bakhmut.

At least six people have died and 15 were injured in Sloviansk on Sunday, according to Tetiana Tiurina, the head of the Public Information and Communication Department of Donetsk region.

The city of Kramatorsk was also hit with three missile strikes Sunday morning but there were no casualties, according to Ukraine's Donetsk Regional Military Administration.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the cities of the Luhansk region were "the epicenter" of the hostilities. In his nightly address on Saturday, Zelensky acknowledged that more than 2,600 Ukrainian cities and towns were under Russian control.

	"The Russian army continued to fire missiles at our cities," Zelensky said, urging people to "help the army, help volunteers, help everyone who was left alone at this time" and to use their contacts to "spread the truth about the war and about the crimes of the occupiers on our land."
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HEADLINE	07/02 US assessments Ukraine war face scrutiny
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/as-ukraine-war-bogs-down-u-s-assessments-face-scrutiny/ar-AAZ6SnK
GIST	<p>The shifting nature of the war in Ukraine has prompted a split among analysts and U.S. lawmakers, with some questioning whether American officials have portrayed the crisis in overly rosy terms while others say the government in Kyiv can win with more help from the West.</p> <p>The growing conjecture comes more than four months after Russia's invasion and its failure to seize the capital. Russian President Vladimir Putin has since narrowed its objectives, focusing on capturing eastern Ukraine's industrial Donbas region while launching thousands of artillery rounds per day at outgunned Ukrainian forces.</p> <p>President Biden, speaking Thursday at a summit of NATO leaders, said the United States is "rallying the world to stand with Ukraine" and pledged to support the cause "as long as it takes."</p> <p>"I don't know ... how it's going to end," the president said, "but it will not end with a Russian defeat of Ukraine in Ukraine."</p> <p>U.S. officials acknowledge that as Russian forces have massed firepower, they have gradually seized territory in the east. That includes capturing the strategically important city of Severodonetsk in June and threatening to do the same in its nearby sister city, Lysychansk.</p> <p>U.S. officials have downplayed the gains, calling them halting and incremental, while highlighting the significant number of Russian military fatalities that have come as a result.</p> <p>But the Ukrainians have sustained heavy casualties, too. Independent estimates indicate each side has seen tens of thousands of soldiers killed and wounded. The Pentagon has largely refused to publicly discuss its assessments of killed and wounded.</p> <p>The Defense Department's overriding concern about discussing the Ukrainian military is balancing what can be said at an unclassified level and not providing an "unintended assessment" that Putin can use to his advantage, Pentagon spokesman Todd Breasseale said.</p> <p>"We're simply not going to do Russia's BDA or intel work for them," Breasseale said, using a military acronym for battle damage assessment. "However, I think we have discussed what we can, when it is knowable, demonstrable and objective."</p> <p>The scrutiny is fueled by U.S. government assessments of other wars, notably in Afghanistan, where U.S. officials habitually glossed over widespread dysfunction and corruption and sidestepped questions of whether battlefield successes were not only achievable but sustainable. Successive administrations insisted Afghan forces were "in the lead" even as their performance was often deeply flawed — and their survival depended on U.S. logistical support and air power.</p> <p>The Biden administration has committed more than \$6.9 billion in weapons and other security assistance to Ukraine since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion, while encouraging other Western allies to provide similar help. The weapons have become increasingly sophisticated, with recent packages including the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, surface-to-air missile defense systems and launchers for Harpoon anti-ship missiles.</p>

Several observers said what the Biden administration says about the war in Ukraine appears to be accurate but that the Pentagon sometimes withholds information that would be unflattering to Ukrainian partners or highlight limitations on U.S. support.

Kori Schake, director of foreign and defense policy studies at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, said that with Ukraine as opposed to Afghanistan, the Pentagon lacks the incentive to “perennially” say the army that it is supporting is turning a corner. There are no known U.S. troops involved in the conflict, limiting the administration’s interest in making such pronouncements, she said.

But Schake criticized what she characterized as Pentagon officials “congratulating themselves” about the type and amount of weapons they are providing while leaving out that the United States could send more, faster.

“Our sense of self-satisfaction and complacency and confidence is actually a disservice to Ukraine,” she said, calling such complacency “practically and morally suspect.”

Schake assessed that Ukrainian forces are able to win the war and probably in the process of accumulating arms ahead of a major counteroffensive that cannot begin until they have enough to repel the Russians.

“We just need to slam the gas pedal on the floor and help them succeed as fast as possible,” she said.

A Ukrainian lawmaker, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, shared similar concerns. The flow of American weapons often is not fast enough, the official said, noting that the rate of howitzer artillery fire, in particular, could soon outpace supply.

“We need a lot of this for yesterday, not even tomorrow,” he said. “We are losing the most valuable thing: our soldiers and officers. That’s why we need heavy weapons faster, and as much as possible.”

Others more wary of U.S. involvement in Ukraine see Washington’s assessments as incomplete for different reasons.

Benjamin Friedman, a policy director at Defense Priorities, said that Ukraine’s stated objective to push Russian forces out seems “increasingly unrealistic” and that the Biden administration must do more to press Ukraine to negotiate with Russia and strive for a political settlement.

“Nobody wants them to cede territory, or hardly anyone wants them to cede territory,” Friedman said. “But you have to assess the situation honestly and say that you’re trading peace for territory. I think we should be doing more to pressure them, and I think we’re sort of doing a disservice not just to regular Ukrainians, but to a lesser extent Americans and everyone else who is suffering economic problems because of the war.”

Friedman said the U.S. government is “spinning for Ukraine for the obvious reason that we are rooting for them” and because a more blunt assessment of Ukrainian losses or liabilities might assist Russia.

“It’s natural,” he said, “not to criticize the people you’re fighting with, and certainly not in public.”

Feelings are similarly split on Capitol Hill.

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) said he does not think the administration is spinning what is happening in Ukraine. Overselling success against Russia could undermine future support from Congress, he said, when there has been “a remarkably trusting and congenial dialogue” about the war since it began.

Moulton, a former Marine Corps officer and combat veteran, said that “the story of this conflict” is the degree to which the administration is disclosing large amounts of detail about what is happening in Ukraine, and that it has been “remarkably open and candid in what is going on.”

“We didn’t tell the American public what ISIS was going to do next,” Moulton said, referring to the Islamic State terrorist group, “or what the insurgents in Afghanistan were going to do next. But that’s exactly what we’ve done with Putin.”

While U.S. support for Ukraine has engendered a degree of bipartisanship seldom seen in Washington, Republicans still see challenges for the administration.

Rep. Peter Meijer (R-Mich.) said the fighting now has a well-defined line of conflict, with territory changing hands slowly. It can be difficult, he said, to understand the nuance of what is coming next as a result.

“I think that’s the fundamental challenge, is we don’t really know,” he said. “But we know it probably is not going to be quick.”

The Pentagon’s role is to communicate what the Defense Department is doing and why, Meijer said. The administration doesn’t “have the greatest track record of communicating accurate analytical statements to the American public that don’t quickly collapse when events change,” he said, alluding in part to early predictions from top U.S. officials that Putin’s military would quickly topple the government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

“Think of the prognosis on how long the Afghan government would hold after the August 31 withdrawal date,” Meijer said. “Think of the initial estimates of how quickly Kyiv would fall in the wake of a Russian invasion.”

Meijer, who served in Army intelligence units, said the truth can be “watered down, so it’s as inoffensive as possible” when intelligence is shared with senior U.S. officials and presidential appointees.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.) also pointed to last summer’s evacuation of Afghanistan, saying that while administration officials highlighted how many planes of evacuees they were able to move per day, they often downplayed “the overall strategic debacle.” In the end, thousands of Afghan interpreters and other allies in the war were left behind.

“I think in Ukraine, they’re very much focused on the amount of stuff that they’re moving and the speed with which they’re moving it — once it’s approved by the White House — and I think losing sight of the fact that Russian is grinding the Ukrainian military down,” he said.

Waltz said that while the Pentagon is looking through “the very narrow parameters of the mission” it has received from the White House, it also has a responsibility to the American people “to see the forest through the trees.”

“They’re describing their success and their very narrow mission set, but what they’re not explaining is: Does that mission set meet American interests?” Waltz said.

Waltz said the United States is good at seeing where the front lines of the war are and assessing where tanks, ships and planes are on the battlefield. It is more difficult, he said, to assess the accuracy of what the Ukrainian Defense Ministry tells the U.S. military, how well the equipment the United States provides is being used, how quickly ammunition is being launched and whether any is disappearing onto the black market because of corruption.

As Biden faces criticism from Republicans, he also is vulnerable to pressure from the left flank of his party, which already is looking for an exit strategy.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) said that while he applauds the administration’s objective in stopping Russia from seizing Kyiv, the United States cannot resign itself to a “prolonged, never-ending conflict that is wreaking havoc on the American economy and the global economy.”

	<p>"I believe we should declare victory for the president's efforts in standing up for a sovereign Ukraine. We should say we won. The Russians lost. They did not achieve their fundamental objective," he said.</p> <p>Democrats, he said, are not resigned to support Ukraine at all costs.</p> <p>"People don't want to see a resigned attitude that this is just going to go on as long as it's going to go on," Khanna said. "What is the plan on the diplomatic front?"</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 Experts urge mass ventilation against Covid
SOURCE	https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220702-covid-air-war-being-lost-experts-warn-urging-mass-ventilation
GIST	<p>Paris (AFP) – The world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against Covid -- properly ventilating public spaces -- more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn.</p> <p>At the moment there is a "fragile, armed peace" with Covid-19, said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva.</p> <p>"In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone," he told AFP.</p> <p>"We need a new phase -- improving the quality of indoor air."</p> <p>Covid-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes -- and even more so when they talk, sing or shout.</p> <p>In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection.</p> <p>While it is generally accepted that Covid can be transmitted within two metres (6.5 feet) via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors.</p> <p>A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission.</p> <p>In research published in the BMJ this week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two metres apart.</p> <p>- Open that window -</p> <p>We know one thing for sure: if you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke.</p> <p>But experts say that nowhere near enough is being done to ventilate public and private spaces across the world.</p> <p>"On the whole, this is an issue that governments have not yet taken up," Flahault said.</p> <p>He called for massively increased funding to ventilate many public spaces, starting with schools, hospitals, public transport, offices, bars and restaurants.</p> <p>"Just as we knew to filter and treat drinking water" in homes at the beginning of the 1900s, "one can imagine some households will equip themselves with air purifiers and consider opening their windows," Flahault said.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Only a few countries have announced ventilation plans since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>In March the US government called on all building owners and operators, as well as schools and universities, to "adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality".</p> <p>The plan, dubbed the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, is covered by previously announced Covid funding and also includes a review of existing ventilation, heating and air conditioning systems.</p> <p>The European Union has not issued any binding statements on improving air quality in light of Covid.</p> <p>However Belgium has announced a plan to have a carbon dioxide meter situated in all places open to the public. Having such a meter is voluntary until the end of 2024, when it becomes mandatory.</p> <p>Stephen Griffin of the School of Medicine at Britain's University of Leeds lamented that the UK had not acted more on ventilation.</p> <p>"Sadly, the UK has not embraced the opportunity to safeguard its citizens in public spaces, its children in schools, or the longevity of the vaccination programme in this way," he told the Science Media Centre.</p> <p>He said that setting minimum safety standards for ventilation in public buildings would also "greatly mitigate the impact of other diseases".</p> <p>"Better ventilation also improves cognition by reducing carbon dioxide levels and, along with filtration, can reduce the impact of pollen and other allergies."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 Omicron subvariants worsen CA wave
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/ultra-contagious-omicron-subvariants-ba-120056379.html
GIST	<p>The growing dominance of two new ultra-contagious Omicron subvariants is prolonging a wave of coronavirus cases in California and sparking growing concerns from health officials that coming weeks could see significant spread and increased hospitalizations.</p> <p>BA.4 and BA.5 are now believed to be responsible for most new infections nationwide. The strains are of particular concern because they are not only especially contagious but also capable of reinfecting those who have survived earlier Omicron infection.</p> <p>When it comes to BA.4 and BA.5, their "superpower is reinfection," said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, a UC San Francisco infectious-disease expert.</p> <p>Additionally, "there's strong evidence they can spread even faster than other subvariants," said Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer.</p> <p>"There also have been some concerning findings in laboratory studies, which found that BA.4 and BA.5 were better able to infect lung cells than the earlier BA.2 subvariant of Omicron," she said.</p> <p>BA.4 and BA.5 are likely to affect countries and regions differently, depending on the overall level of immunity and the number of older and medically vulnerable people. But "all of the information to date points to the need for us to prepare for the likelihood of significant transmission in the upcoming weeks," Ferrer said.</p> <p>"Because of the uncertainty of how exactly these new subvariants will affect us in L.A. County, it does remain important to use all of the measures that work to reduce COVID-19 risk," such as vaccinations, masks, moving activities outdoors, increasing ventilation when indoors, testing and staying at home when sick, she said.</p>

Though coronavirus reinfections have been possible throughout the pandemic, the risk has heightened of late.

"BA.4 and BA.5 are of special concern because of their apparent ability to cause reinfections in people who were already infected with other Omicron subvariants," Ferrer said.

From early December, when Omicron's presence [was first detected](#) in California, through the end of February, the state reported an average of about 14,325 people who were newly reinfected with the coronavirus per week, according to data from the California Department of Public Health.

That figure then receded along with the initial Omicron wave, with an average of 2,315 weekly reinfections reported from early March through early May.

But the metric has since shot up — with 10,409 weekly reinfections reported from mid-May to mid-June. That timeline roughly corresponds with when BA.4 and BA.5 started to circulate more widely.

"It is likely that increases in the total number of reinfections is a result of changes in the epidemiology of COVID-19, trends in case rates and vaccination," as well as improvements in the realm of data compilation, including the implementation in February of automated processing for new reinfections, the California Department of Public Health said in a statement to The Times.

According to the latest figures from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BA.4 and BA.5 [comprised an estimated](#) 52.3% of cases for the weeklong period that ended June 25. That's the first time the pair has represented a combined majority of estimated cases nationwide.

The previous week, the subvariants made up an estimated 37.4% of cases. The proportions are similar in the southwestern U.S., which includes California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii and U.S. Pacific territories. Though the ultimate repercussions of the two strains remain to be seen, their apparent ability to reinfect people threatens to weaken one of the few guardrails for a pandemic-weary populace.

Previous waves have come to a close because the coronavirus hit a wall, stalling when enough people were vaccinated, had been infected or were altering their behavior to an extent that the virus was deprived of vulnerable hosts.

But in a world dominated by BA.4 and BA.5, those who have been infected with the coronavirus — even as recently as a few weeks ago — may not be adequately shielded.

"Reinfection risk is substantially increased due to the new spike mutations we are getting exposed to," Dr. Eric Topol, director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in La Jolla, wrote in a recent [blog post](#). The first Omicron variant "induces a fairly weak, narrow immune response, which doesn't help with exposure to" the more recent Omicron strains, he added.

Topol called BA.5 "the worst version of the virus that we've seen."

"It takes immune escape, already extensive, to the next level, and, as a function of that, enhanced transmissibility, well beyond Omicron (BA.1) and other Omicron family variants that we've seen," [he wrote in](#) another blog post. "You could say it's not so bad because there hasn't been a marked rise in hospitalizations and deaths as we saw with Omicron, but that's only because we had such a striking adverse impact from Omicron, for which there is at least some cross-immunity."

The shifting subvariant dynamic may help explain why the coronavirus is still transmitting at high levels across California, quashing hopes that the pandemic is over.

"I'm concerned because we are seeing more BA.4 and BA.5 in our population, and that could be why we're sort of treading water at such a high level of transmission," Dr. Paul Simon, chief science officer for the L.A. County Department of Public Health, said during a recent briefing.

As of data released Friday, California has recorded a 12% increase in coronavirus cases compared with mid-June, tallying an average of more than 16,900 per day over the last week, [according to data](#) compiled by The Times. On a per capita basis, that's 303 cases a week for every 100,000 residents.

A rate of 100 or more cases a week for every 100,000 residents is considered a high rate of transmission. Los Angeles County is reporting nearly 5,300 cases a day, for a weekly rate of 367 cases per 100,000 residents. That's the highest case rate since early February and represents a 20% week-over-week increase in cases, erasing improvements in the case rate recorded in mid-June.

That still-potent spread can be chalked up to several factors, including residents who have largely abandoned infection-prevention measures and returned to pre-pandemic habits, the emergence of ever-more-contagious strains and the waning of virus immunity.

It was comparatively easier to avoid [last summer's Delta variant](#) or even the [first Omicron strain](#) that struck after Thanksgiving than the more transmissible editions of Omicron that have emerged since.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, President Biden's chief medical adviser, first [tested positive](#) for the coronavirus [2½ weeks ago](#). Xavier Becerra, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [tested positive](#) in [Sacramento](#) in mid-June — about 3½ weeks after initially testing positive while visiting [Berlin](#).

Dr. Abraar Karan, an infectious-disease expert at Stanford University, wondered whether Becerra's June bout of COVID-19 was caused by BA.4 or BA.5. On [Twitter](#), Karan described how he contracted the coronavirus in January, likely with the first Omicron variant, BA.1, but then got infected again in May, likely with BA.2.12.1.

"With more immune-evasive variants, that could be the case for many of us once again, and soon," Karan [wrote](#).

Any infection — whether it's the first or a repeat occurrence — still poses potential health problems. Though much has been said about Omicron's comparatively milder nature, it can still pack a punch.

Even if hospitalization is not required, COVID-19 can still cause miserable symptoms. [And long COVID](#), in which ailments like fatigue, brain fog or difficulty breathing can persist for months or years, remains a risk after every infection, though it is probably reduced by getting up-to-date on vaccinations.

"It's prudent to remain careful despite the fall in hospitalizations and deaths in recent months," Dr. Robert Wachter, chair of UC San Francisco's Department of Medicine, wrote [recently](#), [adding](#) that he has stopped dining at indoor public spaces amid high case rates in his city. "It's all about long COVID — both prolonged symptoms and the elevated long-term risk of [a heart attack], stroke, diabetes, and more."

It's a risk he's all too familiar with. His wife is still contending with symptoms weeks after she was initially infected.

"A healthy 64-year-old who has been vaccinated and boosted, she had an uneventful initial bout with the virus. Yet seven weeks later she continues to suffer from extreme exhaustion and feels as if her brain is working in slow motion," Wachter wrote in an [op-ed](#).

As to whether BA.4 or BA.5 causes more serious illness than other members of the Omicron family, the jury is still out.

Though the World Health Organization [noted recently that](#) current available evidence doesn't indicate a change in disease severity associated with either, the agency also said their growing prevalence "has coincided with a rise in cases" in several regions, with those increases leading to a surge in hospitalizations in some countries.

	<p>BA.5, Topol said, “led to a marked rise in hospitalizations in Portugal where it rapidly became dominant,” and is having a similar effect in many European nations and Israel.</p> <p>There have been reports that a wave fueled by BA.4 and BA.5 in South Africa was associated with somewhat lower death rates than its first Omicron waves, Ferrer said. But, again in Portugal, “the increase in BA.4 and BA.5 appears to be associated with a death rate that's pretty similar” to its first Omicron wave, she said.</p> <p>It wouldn’t be a surprise if the ability of existing vaccinations to protect against severe disease erodes when tested against BA.5, Topol said. After all, the vaccines plus a booster resulted in a 95% protection against severe disease caused by the Delta variant, but that was lowered to 80% when tested against the early Omicron variants BA.1 and BA.2, he said.</p> <p>One major question is whether the potential rollout of an Omicron-specific booster later this year will help. Given how much the variant has mutated in the last seven months, there are concerns such an offering may be relatively outdated by the time it's available.</p> <p>It's ever more important, Topol said, to accelerate work on a new generation of vaccines, such as a nasal vaccine intended to better protect people from infection, and vaccines that can work against all coronavirus variants.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 Texas border mission, crossings grow
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/texas-immigration-greg-abbott-government-and-politics-9845a69bca3fdd1d70f769ef12b5609e
GIST	<p>AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Following the horror of a human-smuggling attempt that left 53 people dead, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott ordered state troopers to inspect more trucks — again expanding a border security mission that has cost billions, given the National Guard arrest powers and bused migrants to Washington, D.C.</p> <p>What Abbott’s get-tough plans haven’t done in the year since he began rolling them out is curb the number of people crossing the border.</p> <p>Along the border in Texas, where officials say Monday’s fatal tractor-trailer journey began, U.S. authorities stopped migrants from crossing illegally 523,000 times between January and May, up from 417,000 over the same span a year ago. It reflects how, across the nation’s entire southern border, crossings are at or near the highest in about two decades.</p> <p>The deadliest smuggling attempt in U.S. history illustrated the limitations of Abbott’s massive border apparatus as the two-term governor, who is up for reelection in November, points the finger at President Joe Biden. Immigration advocates have disagreed with Abbott’s criticism and said Biden is focused on enforcement.</p> <p>“Texas is going to take action to do our part to try to reduce the illegal immigration coming into our country,” Abbott said Wednesday while on the border in the town of Eagle Pass.</p> <p>He said that state troopers would begin inspecting more tractor-trailers in wake of the tragedy. He did not provide details about the extent or location of the inspections. But unlike an inspection effort three months ago that gridlocked the state’s 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) border for a week, troopers are not checking every tractor-trailer as it comes into Texas.</p> <p>The Texas Department of Public Safety did not respond to questions Friday about how many trucks have been inspected since the governor’s order or whether any migrants have been found.</p>

Critics have questioned the transparency and metrics of what is now a \$3 billion mission since Operation Lone Star was launched in the spring of 2021. Some arrests, including for low-level amounts of marijuana during traffic stops, appear to have little to do with border security. After a rushed deployment of the Texas National Guard, some members complained of low morale, late paychecks and having little to do.

Since April, Abbott has [offered bus rides to Washington, D.C., to migrants](#) who cross the border, saying he was taking the immigration issue to Congress' doorstep. So far, about 3,000 migrants have taken the trip at a cost of more than \$5 million.

"Greg Abbott, all he wants to do is gotcha phrases and gotcha stunts without any real solutions," said state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, a Democrat whose district includes the back road in San Antonio where the truck was found abandoned. "He's spent over \$10 billion supposedly securing the border and hasn't done one damn thing to fix this."

U.S. border authorities are stopping migrants more often on the southern border than at any time in at least two decades. Migrants were stopped nearly 240,000 times in May, up by one-third from a year ago.

Comparisons to pre-pandemic levels are complicated because migrants expelled under a public health authority known as Title 42 face no legal consequences, encouraging repeat attempts. Authorities say 25% of encounters in May were with people who had been stopped at least once in the previous year.

Abbott's earlier truck inspection effort drew wide backlash and caused deep economic losses, and troopers found no migrants or drugs.

Abbott stopped the checks after signing agreements with governors in Mexico's four neighboring states, but warned he might reimpose them if he didn't see improvement. The number of migrants crossing in May was higher than in April.

Asked about it Wednesday, Abbott said "accountability may come soon." He also blamed Mexico's federal government, saying it needs to do more.

He says the operation overall has been successful, pointing to more than 4,000 migrants arrested on state criminal trespassing charges, 14,000 felony arrests and drug seizures. He also said Texas has turned back more than 22,000 migrants over the last year — a fraction of the attempted border crossings across the southern border in a single month.

Before Monday's tragedy, the [deadliest attempted smuggling](#) in Texas was in 2003 when the bodies of 19 people were found dead in a sweltering trailer about 100 miles (160 kilometers) southwest of San Antonio. Jeff Vaden, a former U.S. attorney who helped prosecute that case, said sentences for smuggling migrants are not high enough.

"It's not a deterrent for people taking that risk," he said.

One of the first to visit some of the migrants pulled from the truck and hospitalized in San Antonio was Antonio Fernandez, president and CEO of Catholic Charities, which provides migrants and their families with housing and assistance.

Fernandez said summer is usually a slower time, but not this year. A hotel used by Catholic Charities that typically shelters 50 people has lately been filled with 100 every night, and he now has eight members of staff who help families with immigration, up from just one.

"My conversations with a lot of these people, clearly, they have nothing in their countries," Fernandez said. "They don't have a life and they don't feel safe. They're hungry. For them, America is not a choice. It's the only option they have."

HEADLINE	07/03 Fast-changing Covid transforms summer
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-infectious-diseases-fb25f987bab09a11be31a32e832dd9de
GIST	<p>The fast-changing coronavirus has kicked off summer in the U.S. with lots of infections but relatively few deaths compared to its prior incarnations.</p> <p>COVID-19 is still killing hundreds of Americans each day, but is not nearly as dangerous as it was last fall and winter.</p> <p>“It’s going to be a good summer and we deserve this break,” said Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.</p> <p>With more Americans shielded from severe illness through vaccination and infection, COVID-19 has transformed — for now at least — into an unpleasant, inconvenient nuisance for many.</p> <p>“It feels cautiously good right now,” said Dr. Dan Kaul, an infectious diseases specialist at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. “For the first time that I can remember, pretty much since it started, we don’t have any (COVID-19) patients in the ICU.”</p> <p>As the nation marks July Fourth, the average number of daily deaths from COVID-19 in the United States is hovering around 360. Last year, during a similar summer lull, it was around 228 in early July. That remains the lowest threshold in U.S. daily deaths since March 2020, when the virus first began its U.S. spread.</p> <p>But there were far fewer reported cases at this time last year — fewer than 20,000 a day. Now, it’s about 109,000 — and likely an undercount as home tests aren’t routinely reported.</p> <p>Today, in the third year of the pandemic, it’s easy to feel confused by the mixed picture: Repeat infections are increasingly likely, and a sizeable share of those infected will face the lingering symptoms of long COVID-19.</p> <p>Yet, the stark danger of death has diminished for many people.</p> <p>“And that’s because we’re now at a point that everyone’s immune system has seen either the virus or the vaccine two or three times by now,” said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Over time, the body learns not to overreact when it sees this virus.”</p> <p>“What we’re seeing is that people are getting less and less ill on average,” Dowdy said.</p> <p>As many as 8 out of 10 people in the U.S. have been infected at least once, according to one influential model.</p> <p>The death rate for COVID-19 has been a moving target, but recently has fallen to within the range of an average flu season, according to data analyzed by Arizona State University health industry researcher Mara Aspinall.</p> <p>At first, some people said coronavirus was no more deadly than the flu, “and for a long period of time, that wasn’t true,” Aspinall said. Back then, people had no immunity. Treatments were experimental. Vaccines didn’t exist.</p> <p>Now, Aspinall said, the built-up immunity has driven down the death rate to solidly in the range of a typical flu season. Over the past decade, the death rate for flu was about 5% to 13% of those hospitalized.</p> <p>Big differences separate flu from COVID-19: The behavior of the coronavirus continues to surprise health experts and it’s still unclear whether it will settle into a flu-like seasonal pattern.</p>

Last summer — when vaccinations first became widely available in the U.S. — was followed by the delta surge and then the arrival of omicron, which killed 2,600 Americans a day at its peak last February.

Experts agree a new variant might arise capable of escaping the population's built-up immunity. And the fast-spreading omicron subtypes BA.4 and BA.5 might also contribute to a change in the death numbers.

"We thought we understood it until these new subvariants emerged," said Dr. Peter Hotez, an infectious disease specialist at the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas.

It would be wise, he said, to assume that a new variant will come along and hit the nation later this summer.

"And then another late fall-winter wave," Hotez said.

In the next weeks, deaths could edge up in many states, but the U.S. as a whole is likely to see deaths decline slightly, said Nicholas Reich, who aggregates coronavirus projections for the COVID-19 Forecast Hub in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We've seen COVID hospitalizations increase to around 5,000 new admissions each day from just over 1,000 in early April. But deaths due to COVID have only increased slightly over the same time period," said Reich, a professor of biostatistics at University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Unvaccinated people have a six times higher risk of dying from COVID-19 compared with people with at least a primary series of shots, the CDC estimated based on available data from April.

This summer, consider your own vulnerability and that of those around you, especially in large gatherings since the virus is spreading so rapidly, Dowdy said.

"There are still people who are very much at risk," he said.

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HEADLINE	07/03 Australia floods; tens of thousands evacuate
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/03/thousands-forced-evacuate-flooding-New-South-Wales-Australia/1481656860652/
GIST	<p>July 3 (UPI) -- Tens of thousands of people were forced to evacuate New South Wales Sunday as heavy rains caused flooding throughout the southeastern Australian state.</p> <p>The New South Wales State Emergency Service has ordered or advised about 32,000 people to evacuate their homes as rain hammers the region and has caused the Warragamba Dam to spill at a high rate.</p> <p>Emergency Services Minister Steph Cooke said the state was facing a "life-threatening emergency" caused by an east coast low weather system that is expected to remain for several days.</p> <p>"This means even more torrential rain, it means strong damaging winds, and it means coastal erosion in Sydney, the Central Coast, the south coast and the Illawarra," she said. "We are now facing dangers on multiple fronts ... If you live anywhere between Newcastle and Batemans Bay, please don't be caught unaware by the current weather situation."</p> <p>A total of 41 evacuation orders and 44 evacuation warnings were issued to communities in the Illawarra, Western Sydney and Hawkesbury-Nepean areas.</p> <p>Cooke urged that residents should not wait for an evacuation order given the rate of spillage from the dam.</p>

	<p>"If you were safe in 2021, do not assume you will be safe tonight. This is a rapidly evolving situation, and we could very well see areas impacted that have never experienced flooding before," she said, referring to floods in the region last year.</p> <p>NSW SES Commissioner Carlene York warned residents in affected areas to prepare for the situation to get worse overnight, stating that hundreds if not thousands more homes may be subject to evacuation warnings and potential flooding in the coming days.</p> <p>"We ask that those communities really be aware of the messaging that we're putting out," she said. "There are thousands of people that are affected by what we're looking at tonight."</p> <p>A man died in Sydney after falling out of a kayak on the Parramatta River. Police pulled the man out of the water in an attempted rescue but he died at the scene.</p> <p>NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet said that authorities had witnessed "distressing scenes" throughout the state, adding that the government has "mobilized significant resources and all relevant agencies to get help to those in need."</p> <p>"Times like these are difficult. It will test our resilience. But it is also in these times that we see the best in people and the best in our communities," said Perrottet.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 US testing new fire retardant; critics wary
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/US-testing-new-fire-retardant-critics-push-other-17281172.php
GIST	<p>BOISE, Idaho (AP) — U.S. officials are testing a new wildfire retardant after two decades of buying millions of gallons annually from one supplier, but watchdogs say the expensive strategy is overly fixated on aerial attacks at the expense of hiring more fire-line digging ground crews.</p> <p>The Forest Service used more than 50 million gallons (190 million liters) of retardant for the first time in 2020 as increasingly destructive wildfires plague the West. It exceeded 50 million gallons again last year to fight some of the largest and longest-duration wildfires in history in California and other states. The fire retardant cost those two years reached nearly \$200 million.</p> <p>Over the previous 10 years, the agency used 30 million gallons (115 million liters) annually.</p> <p>"No two wildfires are the same, and thus it's critical for fire managers to have different tools available to them for different circumstances a fire may present," the Forest Service said in an email. "Fire retardant is simply one of those tools."</p> <p>The Forest Service said tests started last summer are continuing this summer with a magnesium-chloride-based retardant from Fortress.</p> <p>Fortress contends its retardants are effective and better for the environment than products offered by Perimeter Solutions. That company says its ammonium-phosphate-based retardants are superior.</p> <p>Fortress started in 2014 with mainly former wildland firefighters who aimed to create a more effective fire retardant that's better for the environment. It has facilities in California, Montana and Wyoming, and describes itself as the only alternative to fertilizer-based fire retardants.</p> <p>The company is headed by Chief Executive Officer Bob Burnham, who started his career as a hotshot crew member fighting wildfires and ultimately rose to become a Type 1 incident commander, directing hundreds of firefighters against some of the nation's largest wildfires. He often called in aircraft to disperse plumes of red fire retardant, a decision he said he wonders about now after learning more about fertilizer-based retardants and developing a new retardant.</p>

"This new fire retardant is better," he said. "It's going to be a lot less damaging to our sensitive planet resources, and it's going to be a lot better fire retardant on the ground."

The main ingredient in Fortress products, magnesium chloride, is extracted from the Great Salt Lake in Utah, a method and process the company says is more environmentally friendly and less greenhouse-gas producing than mining and processing phosphate. The Forest Service last summer tested the company's FR-100, and this summer said it will test a version called FR-200.

Perimeter Solutions, which has facilities and equipment throughout the West, has had a number of name and ownership changes over the years but has dominated the market for more than two decades. The company's Phos-Chek LC-95A is the world's most used fire retardant. The company is transitioning to a new retardant called Phos-Chek LCE20-Fx, which the company said is made out of food-grade ingredients, making it a cleaner product.

"We're certain that the products that we make are the safest, most effective, most environmentally friendly products available," said Chief Executive Officer Edward Goldberg. "We've spent decades in partnership with the (Forest Service)."

Phosphate is mined in multiple places. Goldberg said they get phosphate both domestically, including from Idaho, and internationally. He declined to go into detail, but said the company hasn't relied on China or Ukraine, and has substituted other suppliers for Russia and Belarus.

The Forest Service said that tests this summer with FR-200 will be limited to single-engine airtankers flying out of an airtanker base in Ronan, Montana. That appears to be to prevent mixing the companies' retardants.

Two Forest Service watchdog groups contend both types of retardant harm the environment, and that the agency should be spending less on retardant and more on firefighters.

Andy Stahl, executive director of the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, and Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology, both said that the ammonium-phosphates-based retardant is essentially a fertilizer that can boost invasive plants and is potentially responsible for some algae blooms in lakes or reservoirs when it washes downstream. They said the magnesium-chloride-based retardant is essentially a salt that will inhibit plant growth where it falls, possibly harming threatened species.

Both are concerned about direct hits to waterways with either retardant and potential harm to aquatic species. Aircraft are typically limited to giving streams a 300-foot (90-meter) buffer from retardant, but the Forest Service allows drops within the buffer under some conditions, and they sometimes happen accidentally.

"Their theory is that it's a war, and when you're in a war you're going to have collateral damage," Stahl said. "It's the fire-industrial complex, the nexus between corporate and government agencies combined, with really no interest in ending making warfare on wildfires. It's ever-increasing."

Currently, much of the West is in drought. The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, is reporting that so far this year there have been more than 31,000 wildfires that have burned about 5,000 square miles (13,000 square kilometers). That's well above the 10-year average for the same period of about 24,000 wildfires and 2,000 square miles (5,000 square kilometers) burned.

Wildfire seasons have become increasingly longer as climate change has made the West much warmer and drier in the past 30 years, and scientists have long warned that the weather will get wilder as the world warms.

HEADLINE	07/02 Raspberry Robin worm Windows networks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-finds-raspberry-robin-worm-in-hundreds-of-windows-networks/
GIST	<p>Microsoft says that a recently spotted Windows worm has been found on the networks of hundreds of organizations from various industry sectors.</p> <p>The malware, dubbed Raspberry Robin, spreads via infected USB devices, and it was first spotted in September 2021 by Red Canary intelligence analysts.</p> <p>Cybersecurity firm Sekoia also observed it using QNAP NAS devices as command and control servers (C2) servers in early November [PDF], while Microsoft said it found malicious artifacts linked to this worm created in 2019.</p> <p>Redmond's findings align with those of the Red Canary's Detection Engineering team, which also detected this worm on the networks of multiple customers, some of them in the technology and manufacturing sectors.</p> <p>Although Microsoft observed the malware connecting to addresses on the Tor network, the threat actors are yet to exploit the access they gained to their victims' networks.</p> <p>This is in spite of the fact that they could easily escalate their attacks given that the malware can bypass User Account Control (UAC) on infected systems using legitimate Windows tools.</p> <p>Microsoft shared this info in a private threat intelligence advisory shared with Microsoft Defender for Endpoint subscribers and seen by BleepingComputer.</p> <p>Abuses Windows legitimate tools to infect new devices</p> <p>As already mentioned, Raspberry Robin is spreading to new Windows systems via infected USB drives containing a malicious .LNK file.</p> <p>Once the USB device is attached and the user clicks the link, the worm spawns a msixec process using cmd.exe to launch a malicious file stored on the infected drive.</p> <p>It infects new Windows devices, communicates with its command and control servers (C2), and executes malicious payloads using several legitimate Windows utilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fodhelper (a trusted binary for managing features in Windows settings),• msixec (command line Windows Installer component),• and odbconf (a tool for configuring ODBC drivers). <p>"While msixec.exe downloads and executes legitimate installer packages, adversaries also leverage it to deliver malware," Red Canary researchers explained.</p> <p>"Raspberry Robin uses msixec.exe to attempt external network communication to a malicious domain for C2 purposes."</p> <p>Security researchers who spotted Raspberry Robin in the wild are yet to attribute the malware to a threat group and are still working on finding its operators' end goal.</p> <p>However, Microsoft has tagged this campaign as high-risk, given that the attackers could download and deploy additional malware within the victims' networks and escalate their privileges at any time.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 Verified Twitter accounts hacked
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/verified-twitter-accounts-hacked-to-send-fake-suspension-notices/
GIST	<p>Threat actors are hacking verified Twitter accounts to send fake but well-written suspension messages that attempt to steal other verified users' credentials.</p> <p>Twitter verifies accounts if they are considered notable influencers, celebrities, politicians, journalists, activists, and government and private organizations.</p> <p>To receive the verified 'blue badge,' Twitter users must apply for verification and submit supporting documentation to show why their account is 'notable.'</p> <p>As it is not easy to gain a blue badge, threats of suspension can lead to people reacting without thinking, making them prime targets for threat actors who value these types of accounts for their own scams.</p> <p>"We are suspending your account" Friday afternoon, BleepingComputer reporter Sergiu Gatlan received a phishing scam via Twitter DMs that said his account was being suspended for spreading hate speech.</p> <p>"Your account has been flagged as inauthentic and unsafe by our automated systems, spreading hate speech is against our terms of service," reads the phishing message...</p> <p>"We at twitter take the security of our platform very seriously. That's why we are suspending your account in 48h if you don't complete the authentication process."</p> <p>Finally, once I entered the correct information, the phishing page displayed a message stating, "Authenticity Check is completed, your account has been proved authentic by our automatic system, all current problems are resolved".</p> <p>At this point, though, my test account's credentials have been stolen, which I promptly reset to a different one.</p> <p>However, anyone who has gotten this far would not realize their credentials were stolen and would likely find that they can no longer log in to their account later that day or the next day.</p> <p>No one falls for these scams! Before you say that nobody falls for these scams, unfortunately, the proof they do is in the scam itself.</p> <p>These scams are not only being sent to verified users but they are being sent by verified users whose accounts were hacked, likely through similar phishing scams.</p> <p>It is also common to see users, including verified users, post to Twitter that they fell for a phishing attack, even when some of the victims are involved in cybersecurity.</p> <p>Threat actors continue to evolve their tactics to make their attacks look legitimate, and by targeting verified users, they add a sense of urgency that may cause people to overlook suspicious signs.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Teen hackers on Discord selling malware
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/teen-hackers-discord-sell-malware-for-quick-cash/
GIST	Avast security researchers have discovered a server on Discord where a group of minors is involved in developing, upgrading, marketing, and selling malware and ransomware strains on the platform, supposedly to earn pocket money.

The researchers believe all of them are minors since they repeatedly mentioned their parents and teachers and casually used age-specific insults. Researchers learned about their activities through their discussion on Discord.

Minors Promoting Easy-to-Use Malware

The hackers are involved in selling malware strains of Snatch, Lunar, and Rift and offer all kinds of services from info-stealers to [ransomware and cryptominers](#). However, researchers noted that teen hackers mainly provide easy-to-use malware builders and toolkits, which help users employ the “Do it yourself” (DIY) approach to use them without actual programming. All they need to do is customization of appearance and functions.

How does the Group operate?

Interested parties must pay a fee to become a group member or use the malware-as-a-service feature. The registration fee ranges between €5 and €25. In their [report](#), Avast researchers noted that around 100 accounts have already subscribed to access a hacking group.

The malware distribution process is a little unconventional. The hackers create a YouTube video demonstrating a fake crack for a popular computer game or commercial software, including a download link in the description.

To develop a sense of authenticity, other members of the Discord group post comments on the video and thank the author while confirming that the link actually worked. This strategy is much more twisted than [bots for adding comments](#) since it becomes impossible to identify fraud when a video receives comments from genuine users.

How to Deal with Teen Hackers?

It is a fact that this scenario is concerning. Therefore, hacking talent among teens and minors must be diverted towards positive, ethical purposes for the overall betterment of the cybersecurity industry.

Parents must talk to their kids and understand the motivating factors that compel them to indulge in malware distribution. There are so many resources available on Discord and other platforms to help interested individuals start a [career in the cybersecurity industry](#).

However, the first step is that parents should communicate with their kids without judging them. It is worth noting that the group performs illegal malware distribution without realizing the issue’s severity and perceiving it all as [just a prank](#).

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HEADLINE	07/04 Ukraine authorities arrest phishing gang
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/ukrainian-authorities-arrested-phishing.html
GIST	<p>The Cyber Police of Ukraine last week disclosed that it apprehended nine members of a criminal gang that embezzled 100 million hryvnias via hundreds of phishing sites that claimed to offer financial assistance to Ukrainian citizens as part of a campaign aimed at capitalizing on the ongoing conflict.</p> <p>"Criminals created more than 400 phishing links to obtain bank card data of citizens and appropriate money from their accounts," the agency said in a press statement last week. "The perpetrators may face up to 15 years behind bars."</p> <p>The law enforcement operation culminated in the seizure of computer equipment, mobile phones, bank cards as well as the criminal proceeds illicitly obtained through the scheme.</p> <p>Some of the rogue domains registered by the actors included ross0.yolasite[.]com, foundationua[.]com, ua-compensation[.]buzz, www.bless12[.]store, help-compensation[.]xyz, newsukraine10.yolasite[.]com, and euro24dopomoga0.yolasite[.]com, among others.</p>

	<p>The rogue landing pages, which were designed to siphon people's banking information, operated under the guise of surveys designed to fill up an application for payment of financial assistance from E.U. countries, underscoring the opportunistic nature of the social engineering attack.</p> <p>Once in possession of the bank details, the threat actors unauthorizedly logged into the accounts and fraudulently withdrew money totaling more than 100 million hryvnias (\$3.37 million) from over 5,000 citizens.</p> <p>The distribution vector used to propagate the links is not immediately clear, but it could have been achieved through different methods such as SMS phishing (aka smishing), spam emails, direct messages on social media apps, SEO poisoning, or seemingly benign ads.</p> <p>The agency has also warned citizens to "obtain information about financial payments only from official sources, not to click on dubious links, and in no case to communicate confidential, in particular banking, information to third parties or to indicate such data on suspicious resources."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Hacker claims biggest China data breach
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/hacker-biggest-chinese-data-breach-resident-records
GIST	<p>A hacker claimed to have stolen one billion Chinese residents' records from Shanghai police in what would rank as possibly the biggest data breach in the country's history.</p> <p>A post on the hacker hot-spot Breach Forums listed the information "on one billion Chinese national residents and several billion case records" for sale to the sum of 10 Bitcoin, or roughly \$200,000.</p> <p>The poster, using the name ChinaDan, on Sunday said the trove of information included "name, address, birthplace, national ID number, mobile number, all crime/case details."</p> <p>The post remains unverified, but it has drawn immense interest within China and abroad: Users on China's Weibo and WeChat platforms expressed great concern and distress about the truth of the claim.</p> <p>Reuters reported that Weibo blocked #dataleak from trending throughout Sunday.</p> <p>Posters on Breach Forums analyzed a sample of the data and debated the authenticity, largely due to the asking price for such valuable information.</p> <p>One poster called 10 Bitcoin "too cheap" for government information, especially since "you risk being hunted and killed" for it, Asia Markets reported.</p> <p>Forum administrators closed the thread Sunday night, with one offer of 6 Bitcoin on the table at the time.</p> <p>Kendra Schaefer, a partner at consultancy firm Trivium China, said the breach would be "bad, for a number of reasons" if proven authentic.</p> <p>"Most obviously, this would be among the biggest and worst breaches in history," Schaefer wrote on Twitter. "Two, China's Personal Information Protection Law just came out late last year. It requires gov bodies to protect the info of citizens, which if the source is indeed MPS, MPS has failed to do."</p> <p>Schaefer shared that the records "also allegedly contain details on case files of minors," making the breach also a violation of the Minor Protection Law.</p> <p>"Would be surprised if they don't also contain files on celebs and minor officials," she wrote.</p> <p>One reason the breach may have contained so much information is that the Shanghai police would have access to a national data-sharing system, providing access to more information than a regional police authority would otherwise have.</p>

HEADLINE	07/04 UK military probes social media hack
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/elon-musk-technology-7f51f29a378283150ad9343e3ea1e254
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — British military authorities are trying to find out who hacked the army’s social media accounts over the weekend, flooding them with cryptocurrency videos and posts related to collectible electronic art.</p> <p>The investigation was launched after authorized content on the army’s YouTube account was replaced with a video feed promoting cryptocurrencies that included images of billionaire Elon Musk. The Army’s Twitter account retweeted a number of posts about non-fungible tokens, unique digital images that can be bought and sold but have no physical counterpart.</p> <p>“Apologies for the temporary interruption to our feed,” the army said in a tweet posted after the Twitter account was restored on Sunday. “We will conduct a full investigation and learn from this incident. Thanks for following us, and normal service will now resume.”</p> <p>The Ministry of Defense said late Sunday that both breaches had been “resolved.”</p> <p>While internet users were unable to access the Army’s YouTube site on Monday, a spokesperson said the site was down for standard maintenance. The Twitter feed was operating normally.</p> <p>Although U.K. officials have previously raised concerns about state-sponsored Russian hacking, the military did not speculate on who was responsible for Sunday’s breaches.</p> <p>“The army takes information security extremely seriously, and until their investigation is complete it would be inappropriate to comment further,” the Ministry of Defense said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 TikTok: China workers access US data
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/2/china-based-employees-tik-tok-access-us-user-data/
GIST	<p>It turns out that American users of popular social media app TikTok can have their information accessed by employees at the app’s Chinese parent company, ByteDance Ltd.</p> <p>TikTok Chief Executive Officer Shou Zi Chew confirmed as much in a letter to nine U.S. senators, according to Bloomberg News.</p> <p>The outlet reported that Chinese-based employees who clear a number of internal security protocols can access certain information on TikTok’s U.S. users, including public videos and comments.</p> <p>But Mr. Chew said none of that information is shared with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government, per Bloomberg, and that the process is subject to “robust cybersecurity controls.”</p> <p>Some of those senators weren’t convinced.</p> <p>“TikTok’s response confirms our fears about the CCP’s influence in the company were well founded,” Sen. Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee Republican, told Bloomberg. “The Chinese-run company should have come clean from the start, but it attempted to shroud its work in secrecy. Americans need to know if they are on TikTok, Communist China has their information.”</p> <p>TikTok said it’s putting more of the app’s hardware infrastructure stateside in order to strengthen security around Americans’ data.</p> <p>It’s a joint effort with the U.S. government called “Project Texas,” Bloomberg reported, and involves storing information in domestic data centers and shifting its platform to Oracle Corp.’s cloud.</p>

	<p>Scrutiny of the social media app's practices have been a Republican-led effort.</p> <p>Bloomberg reported that 27 Republican senators cited a BuzzFeed News report in a letter late last month that said TikTok's engineers had accessed U.S. consumer data. The letter said such access allowed TikTok and ByteDance to "surveil Americans," according to Bloomberg.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Smartphones and rise of 'digital amnesia'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global/2022/jul/03/is-your-smartphone-ruining-your-memory-the-rise-of-digital-amnesia
GIST	<p>Last week, I missed a real-life meeting because I hadn't set a reminder on my smartphone, leaving someone I'd never met before alone in a café. But on the same day, I remembered the name of the actor who played Will Smith's aunt in <i>The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air</i> in 1991 (Janet Hubert). Memory is weird, unpredictable and, neuroscientifically, not yet entirely understood. When memory lapses like mine happen (which they do, a lot), it feels both easy and logical to blame the technology we've so recently adopted. Does having more memory in our pockets mean there's less in our heads? Am I losing my ability to remember things – from appointments to what I was about to do next – because I expect my phone to do it for me? Before smartphones, our heads would have held a cache of phone numbers and our memories would contain a cognitive map, built up over time, which would allow us to navigate – for smartphone users, that is no longer true.</p> <p>Our brains and our smartphones form a complex web of interactions: the smartphonification of life has been rising since the mid 2000s, but was accelerated by the pandemic, as was internet use in general. Prolonged periods of stress, isolation and exhaustion – common themes since March 2020 – are well known for their impact on memory. Of those surveyed by memory researcher Catherine Loveday in 2021, 80% felt that their memories were worse than before the pandemic. We are – still – shattered, not just by Covid-19, but also by the miserable national and global news cycle. Many of us self-soothe with distractions like social media. Meanwhile, endless scrolling can, at times, create its own distress, and phone notifications and self interrupting to check for them, also seem to affect what, how and if we remember.</p> <p>So what happens when we outsource part of our memory to an external device? Does it enable us to squeeze more and more out of life, because we aren't as reliant on our fallible brains to cue things up for us? Are we so reliant on smartphones that they will ultimately change how our memories work (sometimes called digital amnesia)? Or do we just occasionally miss stuff when we don't remember the reminders?</p> <p>Neuroscientists are divided. Chris Bird is professor of cognitive neuroscience in the School of Psychology at the University of Sussex and runs research by the Episodic Memory Group. "We have always offloaded things into external devices, like writing down notes, and that's enabled us to have more complex lives," he says. "I don't have a problem with using external devices to augment our thought processes or memory processes. We're doing it more, but that frees up time to concentrate, focus on and remember other things." He thinks that the kind of things we use our phones to remember are, for most human brains, difficult to remember. "I take a photo of my parking ticket so I know when it runs out, because it's an arbitrary thing to remember. Our brains aren't evolved to remember highly specific, one-off things. Before we had devices, you would have to make a quite an effort to remember the time you needed to be back at your car."</p> <p>Professor Oliver Hardt, who studies the neurobiology of memory and forgetting at McGill University in Montreal, is much more cautious. "Once you stop using your memory it will get worse, which makes you use your devices even more," he says. "We use them for everything. If you go to a website for a recipe, you press a button and it sends the ingredient list to your smartphone. It's very convenient, but convenience has a price. It's good for you to do certain things in your head."</p>

Hardt is not keen on our reliance on GPS. “We can predict that prolonged use of GPS likely will reduce grey matter density in the hippocampus. Reduced grey matter density in this brain area goes along with a variety of symptoms, such as increased risk for depression and other psychopathologies, but also certain forms of dementia. GPS-based navigational systems don’t require you to form a complex geographic map. Instead, they just tell you orientations, like ‘Turn left at next light.’ These are very simple behavioural responses (here: turn left) at a certain stimulus (here: traffic light). These kinds of spatial behaviours do not engage the hippocampus very much, unlike those spatial strategies that require the knowledge of a geographic map, in which you can locate any point, coming from any direction and which requires [cognitively] complex computations. When exploring the spatial capacities of people who have been using GPS for a very long time, they show impairments in spatial memory abilities that require the hippocampus. Map reading is hard and that’s why we give it away to devices so easily. But hard things are good for you, because they engage cognitive processes and brain structures that have other effects on your general cognitive functioning.”

Hardt doesn’t have data yet, but believes, “the cost of this might be an enormous increase in dementia. The less you use that mind of yours, the less you use the systems that are responsible for complicated things like episodic memories, or cognitive flexibility, the more likely it is to develop dementia. There are studies showing that, for example, it is really hard to get dementia when you are a university professor, and the reason is not that these people are smarter – it’s that until old age, they are habitually engaged in tasks that are very mentally demanding.” (Other scientists disagree – [Daniel Schacter](#), a Harvard psychologist who wrote the seminal *Seven Sins Of Memory: How The Mind Forgets and Remembers*, thinks effects from things like GPS are “task specific”, only.)

While smartphones can obviously open up whole new vistas of knowledge, they can also drag us away from the present moment, like it’s a beautiful day, unexperienced because you’re head down, WhatsApping a meal or a conversation. When we’re not attending to an experience, we are less likely to recall it properly, and fewer recalled experiences could even limit our capacity to have new ideas and being creative. As the renowned neuroscientist and memory researcher [Wendy Suzuki](#) recently put it on the Huberman Lab neuroscience podcast, “If we can’t remember what we’ve done, the information we’ve learned and the events of our lives, it changes us... [The part of the brain which remembers] really defines our personal histories. It defines who we are.”

Catherine Price, science writer and author of [How to Break Up With Your Phone](#), concurs. “What we pay attention to in the moment adds up to our life,” she says. “Our brains cannot multitask. We think we can. But any moment where multitasking seems successful, it’s because one of those tasks was not cognitively demanding, like you can fold laundry and listen to the radio. If you’re paying attention to your phone, you’re not paying attention to anything else. That might seem like a throwaway observation, but it’s actually deeply profound. Because you will only remember the things you pay attention to. If you’re not paying attention, you’re literally not going to have a memory of it to remember.”

The Cambridge neuroscientist [Barbara Sahakian](#) has evidence of this, too. “In an experiment in 2010, three different groups had to complete a reading task,” she says. “One group got instant messaging before it started, one got instant messaging during the task, and one got no instant messaging, and then there was a comprehension test. What they found was that the people getting instant messages couldn’t remember what they just read.”

Price is much more worried about what being perpetually distracted by our phones – termed “continual partial attention” by the tech expert Linda Stone – does to our memories than using their simpler functions. “I’m not getting distracted by my address book,” she says. And she doesn’t believe smartphones free us up to do more. “Let’s be real with ourselves: how many of us are using the time afforded us by our banking app to write poetry? We just passively consume crap on Instagram.” Price is from Philadelphia. “What would have happened if Benjamin Franklin had had Twitter? Would he have been on Twitter all the time? Would he have made his inventions and breakthroughs?

“I became really interested in whether the constant distractions caused by our devices might be impacting our ability to actually not just accumulate memories to begin with, but transfer them into long-term storage

in a way that might impede our ability to think deep and interesting thoughts,” she says. “One of the things that impedes our brain’s ability to transfer memories from short- to long-term storage is distraction. If you get distracted in the middle of it” – by a notification, or by the overwhelming urge to pick up your phone – “you’re not actually going to have the physical changes take place that are required to store that memory.” It’s impossible to know for sure, because no one measured our level of intellectual creativity before smartphones took off, but Price thinks smartphone over-use could be harming our ability to be insightful. “An insight is being able to connect two disparate things in your mind. But in order to have an insight and be creative, you have to have a lot of raw material in your brain, like you couldn’t cook a recipe if you didn’t have any ingredients: you can’t have an insight if you don’t have the material in your brain, which really is long term memories.” (Her theory was backed by the 92-year-old Nobel prize-winning neuroscientist and biochemist [Eric Kandel](#), who has studied how distraction affects memory – Price bumped into him on a train and grilled him about her idea. “I’ve got a selfie of me with a giant grin and Eric looking a bit confused.”) Psychologist professor [Larry Rosen](#), co-author (with neuroscientist [Adam Gazzaley](#)) of *The Distracted Mind: Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World*, also agrees: “Constant distractions make it difficult to encode information in memory.”

Smartphones are, of course, made to hijack our attention. “The apps that make money by taking our attention are designed to interrupt us,” says Price. “I think of notifications as interruptions because that’s what they’re doing.”

For Oliver Hardt, phones exploit our biology. “A human is a very vulnerable animal and the only reason we are not extinct is that we have a superior brain: to avoid predation and find food, we have had to be really good at being attentive to our environment. Our attention can shift rapidly around and when it does, everything else that was being attended to stops, which is why we can’t multitask. When we focus on something, it’s a survival mechanism: you’re in the savannah or the jungle and you hear a branch cracking, you give your total attention to that – which is useful, it causes a short stress reaction, a slight arousal, and activates the sympathetic nervous system. It optimises your cognitive abilities and sets the body up for fighting or flighting.” But it’s much less useful now. “Now, 30,000 years later, we’re here with that exact brain” and every phone notification we hear is a twig snapping in the forest, “simulating what was important to what we were: a frightened little animal.”

Smartphone use can even change the brain, according to the ongoing [ABCD study](#) which is tracking over 10,000 American children through to adulthood. “It started by examining 10-year-olds both with paper and pencil measures and an MRI, and one of their most interesting early results was that there was a relationship between tech use and cortical thinning,” says Larry Rosen, who studies social media, technology and the brain. “Young children who use more tech had a thinner cortex, which is supposed to happen at an older age.” Cortical thinning is a normal part of growing up and then ageing, and in much later life can be associated with degenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s, as well as migraines.

Obviously, the smartphone genie is out of the bottle and has run over the hills and far away. We need our smartphones to access offices, attend events, pay for travel and to function as tickets, passes and credit cards, as well as for emails, calls and messages. It’s very hard not to have one. If we’re worried about what they – or the apps on them – might be doing to our memories, what should we do?

Rosen discusses a number of tactics in his book. “My favourites are tech breaks,” he says, “where you start by doing whatever on your devices for one minute and then set an alarm for 15 minutes time. Silence your phone and place it upside down, but within your view as a stimulus to tell your brain that you will have another one-minute tech break after the 15-minute alarm. Continue until you adapt to 15 minutes focus time and then increase to 20. If you can get to 60 minutes of focus time with short tech breaks before and after, that’s a success.”

“If you think your memory and focus have got worse and you’re blaming things like your age, your job, or your kids, that might be true, but it’s also very likely due to the way you’re interacting with your devices,” says Price, who founded [Screen/Life Balance](#) to help people manage their phone use. As a science writer, she’s “very much into randomly controlled trials, but with phones, it’s actually more of a qualitative

question about personally how it's impacting you. And it's really easy to do your own experiment and see if it makes a difference. It's great to have scientific evidence. But we can also intuitively know: if you practice keeping your phone away more and you notice that you feel calmer and you're remembering more, then you've answered your own question."

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HEADLINE	07/02 Crypto's domino effect widens; turmoil
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/cryptos-domino-effect-is-widening-threatening-more-pain-11656754202
GIST	<p>Turmoil in the digital-assets ecosystem has grown in recent weeks, with losses in cryptocurrencies blowing holes in balance sheets and pushing firms near bankruptcy.</p> <p>After a pair of cryptocurrencies crashed, wiping out billions of dollars in value in May, a British Virgin Islands court this past week ordered a hedge fund that had survived several crypto downturns to liquidate. Another platform that counts the hedge fund as an investor capped withdrawals while evaluating how the hedge fund's woes would affect its liquidity.</p> <p>A handful of crypto players have established financial ties throughout the market and added to risk by borrowing and lending digital assets among themselves, with at least one lender, Celsius Network LLC, drawing on collateral to do its own borrowing.</p> <p>"Everything is deeply, deeply intertwined; we didn't have this in 2018," said Chris Bendiksen, head of research at the London-based asset-management firm CoinShares, referring to a past crypto market downturn.</p> <p>While new to crypto, such problems are well-known in the traditional financial realm. During the 2007-08 global financial crisis, bank-lending practices including rehypothecation of assets—using collateral to borrow more money—left banks short on liquidity. In the aftermath, regulators tightened oversight.</p> <p>Digital asset prices have been falling dramatically along with other speculative bets in response to the Federal Reserve's move to raise interest rates. Crypto's headache intensified in May, when the stablecoin TerraUSD broke from its dollar peg and dragged the value of its sister cryptocurrency Luna down with it, eradicating \$40 billion.</p> <p>Investors got a taste of how the commingling of crypto investments would hit the market when a fire sale of assets backing the TerraUSD stablecoin pushed the price of bitcoin almost \$10,000 lower to trade around \$30,000.</p> <p>Problems facing Three Arrows Capital Ltd., the hedge fund ordered to liquidate after being heavily invested in Luna, spilled over to the crypto brokerage Voyager Digital Ltd. this past week. On Friday, Voyager said it was temporarily suspending trading, deposits, withdrawals and loyalty rewards. It earlier issued a notice of default to Three Arrows for allegedly failing to make a loan repayment of 15,250 bitcoin and \$350 million in USD Coin, a stablecoin. The loan is worth about \$646 million based on bitcoin's current price of around \$19,400. Shares of Voyager, which are traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange, are down more than 96% this year. On Friday, Three Arrows' liquidators asked a New York bankruptcy court to recognize the British Virgin Islands case and to allow them to handle any assets in the U.S.</p> <p>Three Arrows' financial troubles have affected the smaller firms in its orbit. The Hong Kong-based trading firm 8 Blocks Capital said Three Arrows has cut off communications after allegedly misappropriating \$1 million of its capital. Kyber Network, a decentralized-finance project, said the firm has "a small portion of its Treasury" with the hedge fund, which it said hasn't responded to any of its attempts to communicate. Three Arrows didn't respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Crypto still exists largely outside of regulation, with few federal laws specific to crypto and the Securities and Exchange Commission taking up cases against individual firms on an ad hoc basis. The growth of the industry—worth more than \$3 trillion at its peak last year—has surpassed the ability of regulators to keep</p>

up, according to analysts. The blowup of TerraUSD prompted renewed calls for Congress [to pass legislation covering crypto](#).

Without a central bank to swallow illiquid assets and curtail contagion, crypto has taken a page from the traditional financial playbook. The crypto exchange FTX, headed by Sam Bankman-Fried, [has struck a deal](#) with the crypto lender BlockFi Inc. including a \$400 million credit facility and the option for FTX to buy the company for as much as \$240 million. BlockFi Chief Executive Zac Prince said by [Twitter](#) on Friday that market events related to [Celsius](#) and Three Arrows had a negative impact on the company.

BlockFi said it experienced about \$80 million in losses from its loan exposure to the hedge fund. In June, Mr. Bankman-Fried's other crypto company, the trading firm Alameda Research, extended two credit lines, one worth \$200 million and another for 15,000 bitcoins, to Voyager. Alameda acquired a \$35 million stake in Voyager in May.

The travails of the crypto market call to mind the actions of a pair of financiers during prior times of turmoil. J.P. Morgan [twice stepped in](#) to prevent economic collapse before the Federal Reserve system was created in 1913. More recently, in 2008, Warren Buffett helped to revive [Goldman Sachs Group](#) Inc. and [General Electric](#) Co.

The crypto market's problems could be the tip of the iceberg. Three Arrows, a big borrower in the system, has seen its levered positions liquidated by exchanges including BitMEX and Deribit after failing to meet margin calls. Margin calls, which are demands from lenders for more collateral from borrowers to back their loans, have swept across the crypto trading industry as the value of major cryptocurrencies fell in the midst of a broad market selloff.

The crypto investor Mike Novogratz, who [bet heavily on Luna](#) before its spiral, [drew parallels](#) between the current leverage-fueled carnage in crypto and the 1998 blowup of Long-Term Capital Management, a heavily leveraged hedge fund whose collapse sparked concern of contagion in the financial system.

The ascent of leverage in crypto has been growing for years, bursting with the downfall of TerraUSD and a pseudo crypto bank tied to it that offered holders of the stablecoin nearly 20% for putting their deposits in, said Caitlin Long, chief executive of Custodia Bank, which aims to provide custody and other digital asset banking services for institutional investors.

Crypto firms began taking on more leverage after the approval of [Grayscale Bitcoin Trust](#) in 2013. The trust for years was one of the few bitcoin investments that average investors could access in brokerage or retirement accounts. Because of that, its value often traded many times higher than that of spot bitcoin, letting investors profit from the difference. Three Arrows held 6.1% of the trust's shares at the end of 2020, according to a [filing with the SEC](#).

That trade was so successful that investors viewed it as risk-free, Ms. Long said. When it became less profitable as more products became available, investors began trading in bitcoin-futures markets, speculating that the price would go higher yet. And when that dried up, they turned to yield-generating platforms.

"All this leverage flocked from the sure thing to the less sure thing," Ms. Long said. "With each one of these big trends it got riskier for traders to play them."

Crypto investors are bracing for more pain yet. Celsius froze client accounts in June, and the crypto lender Babel Finance and the futures exchange CoinFLEX halted customer withdrawals. Babel Finance said it has reached preliminary agreements on the repayment period of some debts, but it hasn't resumed withdrawals. CoinFLEX is issuing \$47 million of another token in the hope of resuming customer withdrawals after a major customer went into "negative equity."

Faced with uncertainty, some crypto lenders have begun recalling loans to large borrowers to check for their financial health, while others have tightened access to their loan products.

	<p>“There is a shortage of supply as companies like Celsius have now turned off withdrawals and have a smaller amount of assets to lend out,” said Adam Reeds, chief executive of the crypto lender Ledn. “Many market makers who used to borrow from platforms like that are now looking at alternatives.”</p> <p>For now, executives in the industry are hoping the current crisis is a repeat of the “crypto winter” in 2018, during which the bad actors who orchestrated the boom and bust of initial coin offerings were flushed out, making the system stronger as a result.</p> <p>“Just like we the industry flushed out all the ICO froth in the previous bull market, in this one it’s all the leverage being flushed out,” Ms. Long said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 Anonymized ransomware sites on dark web
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/researchers-share-techniques-to-uncover.html
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers have detailed the various measures ransomware actors have taken to obscure their true identity online as well as the hosting location of their web server infrastructure.</p> <p>"Most ransomware operators use hosting providers outside their country of origin (such as Sweden, Germany, and Singapore) to host their ransomware operations sites," Cisco Talos researcher Paul Eubanks said. "They use VPS hop-points as a proxy to hide their true location when they connect to their ransomware web infrastructure for remote administration tasks."</p> <p>Also prominent are the use of the TOR network and DNS proxy registration services to provide an added layer of anonymity for their illegal operations.</p> <p>But by taking advantage of the threat actors' operational security missteps and other techniques, the cybersecurity firm disclosed last week that it was able to identify TOR hidden services hosted on public IP addresses, some of which are previously unknown infrastructure associated with DarkAngels, Snatch, Quantum, and Nokoyawa ransomware groups.</p> <p>While ransomware groups are known to rely on the dark web to conceal their illicit activities ranging from leaking stolen data to negotiating payments with victims, Talos disclosed that it was able to identify "public IP addresses hosting the same threat actor infrastructure as those on the dark web."</p> <p>"The methods we used to identify the public internet IPs involved matching threat actors' [self-signed] TLS certificate serial numbers and page elements with those indexed on the public internet," Eubanks said.</p> <p>Besides TLS certificate matching, a second method employed to uncover the adversaries' clear web infrastructures entailed checking the favicons associated with the darknet websites against the public internet using web crawlers like Shodan.</p> <p>In the case of Nokoyawa, a new Windows ransomware strain that appeared earlier this year and shares substantial code similarities with Karma, the site hosted on the TOR hidden service was found to harbor a directory traversal flaw that enabled the researchers to access the "/var/log/auth.log" file used to capture user logins.</p> <p>The findings demonstrate that not only are the criminal actors' leak sites accessible for any user on the internet, other infrastructure components, including identifying server data, were left exposed, effectively making it possible to obtain the login locations used to administer the ransomware servers.</p> <p>Further analysis of the successful root user logins showed that they originated from two IP addresses 5.230.29[.]12 and 176.119.0[.]195, the former of which belongs to GHOSTnet GmbH, a hosting provider that offers Virtual Private Server (VPS) services.</p>

"176.119.0[.]195 however belongs to AS58271 which is listed under the name Tyatkova Oksana Valerievna," Eubanks noted. "It's possible the operator forgot to use the German-based VPS for obfuscation and logged into a session with this web server directly from their true location at 176.119.0[.]195."

LockBit adds a bug bounty program to its revamped RaaS operation

The development comes as the operators of the emerging [Black Basta](#) ransomware [expanded](#) its attack arsenal by using QakBot for initial access and lateral movement, and taking advantage of the PrintNightmare vulnerability ([CVE-2021-34527](#)) to conduct privileged file operations.

What's more, the LockBit ransomware gang last week [announced](#) the release of LockBit 3.0 with the message "Make Ransomware Great Again!," in addition to launching their own Bug Bounty program, offering rewards ranging between \$1,000 and \$1 million for identifying security flaws and "brilliant ideas" to improve its software.

"The release of LockBit 3.0 with the introduction of a bug bounty program is a formal invitation to cybercriminals to help assist the group in its quest to remain at the top," Satnam Narang, senior staff research engineer at Tenable, said in a statement shared with The Hacker News.

"A key focus of the bug bounty program are defensive measures: Preventing security researchers and law enforcement from finding bugs in its leak sites or ransomware, identifying ways that members including the affiliate program boss could be doxed, as well as finding bugs within the messaging software used by the group for internal communications and the Tor network itself."

"The threat of being doxed or identified signals that law enforcement efforts are clearly a great concern for groups like LockBit. Finally, the group is planning to offer Zcash as a payment option, which is significant, as Zcash is harder to trace than Bitcoin, making it harder for researchers to keep tabs on the group's activity."

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HEADLINE	07/05 New clues emerge: REvil back?
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/as-new-clues-emerges-experts-wonder-is.html
GIST	<p>Change is a part of life, and nothing stays the same for too long, even with hacking groups, which are at their most dangerous when working in complete silence. The notorious REvil ransomware gang, linked to the infamous JBS and Kaseya, has resurfaced three months after the arrest of its members in Russia.</p> <p>The Russian domestic intelligence service, the FSB, had caught 14 people from the gang. In this apprehension, the 14 members of the gang were found in possession of 426 million roubles, \$600,000, 500,000 euros, computer equipment, and 20 luxury cars were brought to justice.</p> <p>REvil Ransomware Gang- The Context</p> <p>The financially-motivated cybercriminal threat group Gold Southfield controlled ransomware group known as REvil emerged in 2019 and spread like wildfire after extorting \$11 million from the meat-processor JBS.</p> <p>REvil would incentivize its affiliates to carry out cyberattacks for them by giving a percentage of the ransom pay-outs to those who help with infiltration activities on targeted computers.</p> <p>In July 2021, hackers working under REvil exploited zero-day vulnerabilities in Managed Service Provider (MSP) service developed by a company called Kaseya. As is often the case, these vulnerabilities had not been patched and were therefore open for exploitation. The code change was deployed globally against over 30 MSPs worldwide and 1,000 business networks managed by those MSPs.</p> <p>The hackers rented their ransomware to other cyber criminals so that a similar attack could occur and disrupt the activities of others. It's been reported how sustained ransomware attacks were conducted</p>

revealed that most hacking groups utilize Ransomware-as-service by renting out their services to other users (who often have easy access to the victim's systems, networks, and other personal information). The famous Colonial Pipeline, the oil pipeline company, operating in the United States, was [attacked by REvil](#) as part of a Ransomware service.

In October 2021, a multi-country law enforcement operation seized control of REvil's main ransomware-related resources and dismantled the darknet campaign that was being conducted on anonymous ToR servers.

But thanks to the U.S.-Russian collaboration, the REvil gang was dismantled, and the group itself was hacked. The crime group's "Happy Blog" website, used to leak victim data and extort companies and provide an avenue for commending members involved in successful attacks, [was forced offline](#).

REvil Making a Comeback

Cybersecurity researchers have put forward samples of REvil ransomware. Their findings, based on the findings of samples which all showed identical creation dates and compilation strings along with several other attributes, which mean the same person/team probably makes it - strengthens their argument that they have indeed identified the original REvil ransomware developer and should logically, therefore, conclude that the self-exiled cybercriminal group known as REvil has returned. Recently, the latest Ransomware leak site was promoted through the Russian forum RuTOR – a website that allegedly markets leaked data to customers.

As Per Vines, REvil's Tor Sites Have Come Back to Life.

In late April of this year, security researchers noticed some malware found in previous attacks had resumed activity after a long period of quiet. Two researchers who are into the dark side of cybersecurity recently uncovered a blog on the dark web that is used to publish ransomware attacks, and it was enticing others to take part in this dangerous trend. They also came across news that attackers have taken it upon themselves to recruit more ghost hackers.

Ransomware sample confirms the return:

The latest sample has made use of longer GUID-type values, such as 3c852cc8-b7f1-436e-ba3b-c53b7fc6c0e4 for the SUB and PID options to track campaign and affiliate identities, respectively.

Is REvil Back? - How Can You Fight Back?

REvil is known for being particularly destructive ransomware, and its return means that businesses and individuals need to be on high alert for possible attacks. It is too early to tell if the REvil ransomware gang's comeback will be as effective as its predecessor.

But the fact that it surfaced soon after the takedown operation indicates that this may be their intent, and best ransomware protection and web security practices are suggested to be a regularity.

When it comes to safeguarding your website from hackers and criminals, there are several methodologies you can use - some of which include:

- Using an automated web application scanner, manual penetration testing.
- Setting up anti-malware & anti-virus programs for regular security scans and so on.
- Implement security training programs – your end-users and employees should know the ransomware threat and how it is launched.
- Enabling the principle of "least privilege" for application users will help you ensure that no one can access any part of your application that another user doesn't also have access to, which will allow them to avoid any security breaches from happening.
- Support your information security department by introducing cyber threat awareness initiatives that teach end-users and employees how to recognize cyber criminals' modus operandi.
- Ensure your business is protected from downloading any executable files attached to incoming or outgoing emails so your website's application isn't vulnerable to hackers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To stop cyber attackers from breaking into your web applications, it is suggested to configure a Web Application Firewall (WAF) to block access to malicious IP addresses. Furthermore, installing proper SSL certificates for protection against Man-In-The-Middle attacks or using login plugins that verify the client's security token can reduce the risk of succumbing to data breaches. Bring in the support from trusted managed cybersecurity service providers like Indusface to stay ahead of emerging threats and assist in addressing real-time security issues. Make sure they have the appropriate certifications, keep up to date on the latest cybersecurity news, and are always available should you need in-the-field assistance. <p>Conclusion</p> <p>It won't be a surprise if the REvil ransomware group resumes attacks as the original creator(s) of the previous incarnation still exist. Even those caught are likely to attempt it again in the future, which is especially scary if you think about how prepared these online crooks are.</p> <p>Getting your customers' digital identities, servers, and data files stolen because of ransomware could mean losing a lot of time and money as these attacks only get worse with time.</p> <p>Also, the importance of protecting your reputation or avoiding getting it damaged can arguably be beyond measure. Therefore, businesses must ensure that their brand, intellectual property, and personal or sensitive information are protected from cyber criminals who use ransomware attacks daily.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 AstraLocker ransomware shuts down
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/astralocker-ransomware-shuts-down-and-releases-decryptors/
GIST	<p>The threat actor behind the lesser-known AstraLocker ransomware told BleepingComputer they're shutting down the operation and plan to switch to cryptojacking.</p> <p>The ransomware's developer submitted a ZIP archive with AstraLocker decryptors to the VirusTotal malware analysis platform.</p> <p>BleepingComputer downloaded the archive and confirmed that the decryptors are legitimate and working after testing one of them against files encrypted in a recent AstroLocker campaign.</p> <p>While we only tested one decryptor that successfully decrypted files locked in one campaign, other decryptors in the archive are likely designed to decrypt files encrypted in previous campaigns.</p> <p>"It was fun, and fun things always end sometime. I'm closing the operation, decryptors are in zip files, clean. I will come back," AstraLocker's developer said. "I'm done with ransomware for now. I'm going in cryptojacking lol."</p> <p>While the developer did not reveal the reason behind the AstraLocker shutdown, it's likely due to the sudden publicity brought by recent reports that would land the operation in law enforcement's crosshairs.</p> <p>A universal decryptor for AstraLocker ransomware is currently in the works, to be released in the future by Emsisoft, a software company known for helping ransomware victims with data decryption.</p> <p>While it doesn't happen as often as we'd like, other ransomware groups have released decryption keys and decryptors to BleepingComputer and security researchers as a gesture of goodwill when shutting down or releasing new versions.</p> <p>The list of decryption tools released in the past includes Avaddon, Ragnarok, SynAck, TeslaCrypt, Crysis, AES-NI, Shade, FilesLocker, Ziggy, and FonixLocker.</p>

AstraLocker ransomware background

As threat intelligence firm ReversingLabs recently revealed, AstraLocker used a somewhat unorthodox method of encrypting its victims' devices compared to other ransomware strains.

Instead of first compromising the device (either by hacking it or buying access from other threat actors), AstraLocker's operator would directly deploy the payloads from email attachments using malicious Microsoft Word documents.

The lures used in AstraLocker attacks are documents hiding an OLE object with the ransomware payload that will get deployed after the target clicks Run in the warning dialog displayed when opening the document.

Before encrypting files on the now-compromised device, the ransomware will check if it's running in a virtual machine, kill processes and stop backup and AV services that would hinder the encryption process.

Based on ReversingLabs' analysis, AstraLocker is based on the leaked Babuk Locker (Babyk) ransomware source code, a buggy but still dangerous strain that exited the space [in September 2021](#).

Additionally, one of the Monero wallet addresses in AstraLocker's ransom note was also linked to the operators of [Chaos ransomware](#).

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HEADLINE	07/03 Scanned HTML attachments: 21% malicious
SOURCE	https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/21-of-all-html-attachments-scanned-over-past-month-found-malicious-report-122070300382_1.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>After analysing data on the millions of attachments, a team of researchers has found that 21 per cent of all HTML attachments scanned over the past month were malicious.</p> <p>According to Barracuda researchers, malicious HTML attachments are being used for credential phishing.</p> <p>"These attacks are difficult to detect because HTML attachments themselves are not malicious. Attackers do not include malware in the attachment but instead use multiple redirects with Javascript libraries hosted elsewhere," Parag Khurana, Country Manager, Barracuda Networks India, said in a statement.</p> <p>"Potential protection against these attacks should take into account an entire email with HTML attachments, looking at all redirects and analysing the content of the email for malicious intent," Khurana added.</p> <p>The malicious HTML attachments include a link to a phishing site, which, when opened, gets redirected to a third-party machine that requests the users to enter their credentials to access information or download a file that may contain malware.</p> <p>HTML attachments are commonly used in email communication. These are particularly common in system-generated email reports that users might receive regularly. These messages include URL links to the actual report.</p> <p>Attackers have been embedding HTML attachments in emails disguised as a weekly report, tricking users into clicking on phishing links.</p> <p>These are successful techniques because hackers no longer need to include malicious links in an email, allowing them to easily bypass anti-spam and anti-virus policies.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	07/05 France repatriates 51 from Syria IS camps
SOURCE	https://www.theintelligencer.com/news/article/France-brings-51-citizens-home-from-IS-camps-in-17284641.php
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — French authorities on Tuesday repatriated 51 women and children from the former Islamic State-controlled areas in Syria, according to a statement from the national antiterrorist prosecutor's office.</p> <p>It's the single largest return of women and children to France from camps in northeastern Syria since the territorial defeat of the Islamic State group in March 2019. France saw more of its citizens leave to join IS than any other country in Europe.</p> <p>Tuesday's group comprises 16 women, aged 22 to 39, and 35 minors, seven of whom are coming to France unaccompanied by adults. All but two of the women in the group are French citizens. Twelve women returned with their children and four of the women had previously agreed to the return of their children, according to the prosecutor's statement.</p> <p>Eight women were taken into custody for questioning and the other eight were detained on arrest warrants. The children were placed in the care of the child protective services attached to the Versailles Judicial Court.</p> <p>One of the 35 minors is in police custody on suspicion of participating in activities of a terrorist criminal enterprise, according to the prosecutor's statement. The minor will shortly turn 18, the statement said.</p> <p>Many European countries were slow to allow the return of women and children for fear they would violently turn on their homelands. France, which saw more of its citizens join IS in Syria than any other European country and suffered multiple deadly attacks beginning in 2015, has been especially reluctant.</p> <p>French authorities have insisted that adults who fought with IS should be prosecuted in the country where they had committed crimes.</p> <p>In December, a 28-year-old Frenchwoman with diabetes died in a camp in Syria, leaving her 6-year-old daughter an orphan, according to the family's lawyer, who had been requesting their return since 2019.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Atomwaffen members trained in Russia?
SOURCE	https://malcontentment.com/washingtons-defunct-atomwaffen-division-had-deep-ties-to-the-terrorist-org-russia-imperialist-movement/
GIST	<p>[KIRKLAND, Wash.] – MTN On February 26, 2020, in the Totem Lake Fred Meyer parking lot in Kirkland, FBI agents moved in and arrested neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division leader Cameron Brandon Shea of Redmond, Washington, on a warrant for four felonies. Shea, who worked in the Seattle suburb grocery store, was arrested with four coconspirators on various charges. On the surface, Atomwaffen appears to be an internally created extremist group that identifies with the policies of Nazi Germany. In reality, the group has ties to the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), and former Washington state residents Kaleb James Cole and Aiden Bruce Umbaugh likely received military training in St. Petersburg, Russia.</p> <p>The trail that led three Washingtonians to connect with Russian neo-Nazi terrorist leaders follows a twisted path that begins in the mind of a 14-year-old American in 1966. The road winds through a global white nationalist movement with roots in St. Petersburg, Russia, leading to the creation of Iron March by a Russian national who used the pseudonym of Alexander Slavros, and amplified by Brandon Clint Russell.</p> <p>In late 2015, the Atomwaffen division in the United States was born, and a few months later, Cole created the Washington Division of Atomwaffen in the suburbs of Seattle. Among those who created a deeper</p>

connection to the terrorist organization RIM? The founder of the white power Traditionalist Worker Party and Iron Dome, Matthew Heimbach.

Russell, a dual citizen of The Bahamas and the United States, was openly radicalized in his teens. He engaged in the online forum Iron March, where he quickly grew credibility among the neo-Nazi movement. Despite his beliefs being public and his direct ties to five radicalized far-right organizations, Russell was able to enlist in the Florida National Guard. A 2017 double homicide investigation in Tampa, Florida, revealed Russell's connections and the discovery of bomb-making materials, radioactive isotopes, and neo-Nazi propaganda.

Russell was never charged with the murder of his roommates, both members of Atomwaffen. He was arrested on federal charges and, in September 2017, pled guilty to possessing an unregistered destructive device and illegally storing explosives. Within Russell's orbit was John Cameron Denton, one of the earliest members of Atomwaffen. Between 2016 and 2017 and likely before his arrest, Russell passed leadership to the neo-Nazi group to him.

Heimbach was influenced by the ramblings of cult leader Charles Manson and his admirer James Mason. Mason is considered the Godfather of fascist terrorism in North America. Among white nationalists, the 1992 book *The Seige* is a manifesto for creating a global race war to establish white nationalist rule. Mason's writings call for the creation of autonomous neo-Nazi terror cells and the destruction of the United States government.

Mason's radicalization started when he was 14 and joined the American Nazi Party (ANP) in the 1960s. After the founder of the ANP was assassinated in 1967, Mason wandered for several years before joining the National Socialist Liberation Front. In 1982 Mason started writing letters to Manson disciples Sandra Good and Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme. The pair were imprisoned for participating in the grizzly Manson Family murder spree in 1969, leaving seven dead. Good and Fromme introduced Mason to Manson through correspondence, and Manson, from his prison cell, formed the Universal Order movement with Mason in 1982.

Mason had started writing a series of essays in 1980 for a self-published monthly newsletter called *The Seige*. From 1980 to 1986, Mason praised Manson and professed that the cult leader would be the ideal person to mold a new Nazi leadership in a post-race-fueled civil war America. Michael Moynihan (not to be confused with the American journalist) was a reader of *The Seige*, and in 1992 he edited and published the writings as a book called *The Seige: The Collective Writings of James Mason*. In 2003, the Black Sun Press republished the book under a new name, *The Seige*, and added a foreword written by Mason.

Around the same time *The Seige* was being prepared for publication Stanislav Vorobyev formed RIM in St. Petersburg, Russia. The ultranationalist organization embraces neo-Nazi ideology, wants to restore Russia to its pre-1917 borders, eliminate those not of ethno-Russian blood and re-establish rule by the Russian Orthodox Church and white nationalists with bloodlines to the tsarist Romanovs.

RIM didn't draw much attention in post-Soviet collapsed Russia until 2007 when Vorobyev formed the Rezerv Paramilitary Club (RPC). In Russia, paramilitary clubs are legal and controlled by the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF). DOSAAF was created in the 1950s by the Soviet Union to promote a healthy lifestyle and teach the history of Russian military glory. The RPC formed a paramilitary training camp at an abandoned Soviet-era military base in St. Petersburg with the blessing of the Kremlin.

In 2012 with support from then Russian Federation President Dmitry Medvedev, RIM formed the New Force political party. The platform softened its extremist message to become more palatable to the Russian public. It claimed to support "democratic values" but called for restricting immigration to ethnic Russians and holding undocumented immigrants in slave labor camps. In 2013 working with other Russian-based neo-Nazi groups, RIM went public, organizing an anti-immigration protest in Voronezh, Russia.

In late 2013 as Ukraine made its intentions of pulling away from the Kremlin known, Vorobyev wrote, “The stability of anti-Russian regimes on all the territory inhabited by the Russian ethnos” is the greatest threat to the “Russian national survival.” Working with pro-Russian figures in Ukraine, members of RIM were involved in destabilizing the Kyiv government and fomenting Euromaidan counterprotests that led to dozens of deaths.

On February 28, 2014, the day after the Russian military occupied the Crimea Peninsula, members of RIM flew with the Russian military to Sevastopol. Among the passengers were Vorobyev and Nikolay Trushchalov, the head of external affairs for RIM. In March, four members of RIM met with neo-Nazi pro-Russian separatist leaders in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk.

After the meeting in Donetsk, RIM coordinated with other ultranationalist and pro-Nazi organizations in Russia, including Rodina. It held a demonstration in Moscow to support ethnic Russians living in Ukraine. In a cynical twist, Russian organizations aligned with Nazi ideology led protests accusing the legitimate government in Kyiv of Nazi atrocities.

Around the same time, the RPC received its new name, the Russian Imperial Legion, and started training mercenaries to fight against Ukraine. RIM actively recruited military veterans and provided two weeks of combat training, sending squad-sized groups into separatist-controlled Ukraine through humanitarian corridors. RIM mercenaries reported directly into the Russian 1st and 2nd Army Corps of the Donetsk (DNR) and Luhansk People’s Republics (LNR). Vorobyev and Trushchalov worked with Russian military veteran and Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agent Igor Girkin (who goes by the alias Igor Strelkov). Girkin is accused of being directly responsible for the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, which killed 298 when a Boeing 777-200ER was shot down on the Ukraine-Russia border. Girkin was the first commander of the 1st Army Corps of the DNR and had up to 300 RIM-provided mercenaries of the Imperial Legion under his command.

The troops led by Girkin were accused of committing dozens of atrocities against Ukrainians and Ukrainian soldiers. Even today, Girkin on Telegram rails against prisoner of war exchanges done by the Russian Federation in Ukraine and reminds his followers that if he was still in charge of the DNR 1st Army Corps, he would take no prisoners.

In the fall of 2014, Girkin was forced to flee to Russia after a series of military failures in the Donbas, refusal to comply with the directives of the Kremlin and the negative publicity from the downing of Flight 17. The FSB started a purge of Girkin-aligned leaders in the 1st Army Corps due to their ideology being out of alignment with Moscow’s goals. But among white nationalists and neo-Nazis, the credibility of RIM and the Imperial Legion grew, gaining international attention on Telegram, the dark web, and the Russian Facebook clone VKontakte.

Although overt racism and white nationalism were pushed just under the surface in American society starting in the late 1970s, the ideology and its purveyors didn’t fade away. The Internet, economic dissatisfaction caused by the Great Recession of 2008, and the election of Barack Obama and his “liberal agenda” caused the movement to rise back to the surface. Hate groups found the Internet was the perfect place to share their message, radicalize people in their youth, and recruit members to their ranks. The organizations weaponized the First Amendment to support their cause while amplifying their messages through the use of marketing agencies, troll farms, and automated bots. Social media companies and web host providers were slow to respond.

Among those to embrace this newfound acceptance was Heimbach, the co-founder of the Traditionalist Worker Party. In 2011, he joined the Youth for Western Civilization (YFWC) club at Towson University in Maryland. Like Mason and Russell, Heimbach’s radicalization started in his teens, and like RIM founder Vorobyev in Russia, he earned a degree in history. In 2012 Heimbach wrote in the YFWC blog, “No longer will the homosexual, Muslim, and black supremacist groups be allowed to hijack our campus. [We are] preparing to take our campus back, all we need is the help of people like you to make it happen.”

For the administration of Towson University, the blog posts and campus vandalism with the messages of “white pride” and “white guilt is over” scrawled on sidewalks and buildings was a bridge too far. In the spring of 2012, the university dissolved the YFWC chapter. Undeterred, Heimbach created the White Student Union and invited Jared Taylor, the creator of the ultranationalist faux think tank American Renaissance, to speak at the university. Taylor was so impressed by Heimbach’s radical views on race that he took him under his wing.

In 2013 Taylor invited Heimbach to speak at the American Renaissance conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Another featured speaker was neo-Nazi Richard Spencer, a speaker, and organizer of the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. Taylor’s session was called “Report from the Trenches.” At the conference, Heimbach asked Paul Ramsey, “Where do we create our ethnostate?”

Ramsey replied, “We need to Balkanize and create our own homeland. We have a right to exist.”

With white nationalist movements moving to the open in the United States and Russia and politicians in both countries embracing the ideology, the twin paths a world apart were on a collision course.

In 2015 the International Conservative Forum of Russia was held in St. Petersburg with support from the Russian government. The conference was organized by Rodina and RIM, attracting leaders and influencers of white nationalist organizations from Germany, Italy, Greece, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the United States. Among the attendees from the United States was Taylor of American Renaissance. Also in attendance was Russell, who had already laid the foundation to create Atomwaffen.

Russell began spreading his ultranationalist message online in 2011 when he was 16 years old, creating the neo-Nazi organization Iron March in 2013. In 2015 while in St. Petersburg, he met with Taylor of American Renaissance and the leaders of the Nordic Resistance Movement of Sweden, the National Action group of Germany, CasPound of Italy, and Golden Dawn of Greece. In October of 2015, Russell announced the creation of Atomwaffen in Florida.

Shortly after the same conference and Taylor’s return to the United States, his pupil Heimbach formed Iron Dome. The new organization was created in parallel with the Traditionalist Worker Party, but aligned with the call of direct action and terror cell-based ultranationalism. Iron Dome would eventually merge with Atomwaffen.

Members of the Nordic Resistance Movement who attended the Russian forum in 2015 returned to St. Petersburg in 2016 and received combat training from RIM. From November 2016 to January 2017, Nordic Resistance Movement members Anton Thulin, Viktor Melin, and a third coconspirator executed three terrorist attacks in Gothenburg, Sweden. The trio targeted a coffee shop and two asylum homes for refugees. In the third incident, the bomb failed to detonate. The three were tried and found guilty of the attacks and sentenced to 8-1/2 years in prison.

At the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Heimbach met members of the Atomwaffen Division and moved the Traditionalist Workers Party further right, fully embracing anti-Semitism and white nationalism. According to ProPublica and the Southern Poverty Law Center, Heimbach wrote on Discord after Charlottesville, “The Jews will use their guns to try to stop us, but also their pigs and courts to try to break our spirits.” In the same post, he referred to people of the white race as victims of the “Zionist Occupation Government” – repeating the antisemitic conspiracy that a Jewish deep state international conspiracy runs the United States government. Heimbach was enamored with Atomwaffen, calling the group “our friends.”

After Charlottesville, RIM’s Western European representative Stanislav Shevchuk traveled to the United States to establish connections between RIM and far-right extremist white nationalist groups. Heimbach had become a regular on American news programs, interviewed by the mainstream media where he was given an open platform to share his white nationalist views. Due to Heimbach’s public profile in the United States and his connections to Taylor, Mason, Spencer, and his embrace of Atomwaffen, Shevchuk asked to meet with the white nationalist figure. Despite being a highly visible voice for white nationalism

in the United States, behind the curtain, he held little influence. The real power brokers in Atomwaffen were Cole, Shea, Russell, and Denton, who was the leader of Atomwaffen in the United States.

Heimbach gave Shevchuk a guided tour of Washington D.C., where they displayed the RIM nationalist flag outside the White House. They also visited Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and posed in front of a statue of Robert E. Lee with a Confederate flag and the RIM nationalistic flag of black, yellow, and white.

While Heimbach was the bearded smiling face of white nationalism and anti-Semitism, Cole, Shea, Russell, and Denton were moving ahead with a far more violent plan influenced by Mason. In 2016, Cole founded the Washington chapter of Atomwaffen in the shadow of Seattle.

Although Seattle and Portland, Oregon are perceived to be liberal strongholds, both cities lie in what was once the Oregon Territory which passed increasingly aggressive anti-immigration legislation. On June 18, 1844, the Oregon Territory Provisional Government passed a law that Blacks attempting to settle in the territory would be publicly whipped with 39 lashes every six months.

On September 27, 1850, the United States Congress passed the Donation Land Claim Act, which made it illegal for anyone other than whites, or whites of mixed race with indigenous peoples, to settle in the Oregon Territory. The law designated that any white male United States citizen eighteen years or older could claim a 320-acre parcel of land free of charge in parts of modern-day Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Wyoming.

More than 160 years later, hate groups, white nationalist organizations, anti-Semites, and neo-Nazis thrive just out of view. The Proud Boys, III%, Patriot Front, and Patriot Prayer operate in the open and actively recruit members online and among the antivaccination and antigovernment communities.

Overt racism, anti-Black, and anti-immigration legislation and violence continued in the Pacific Northwest for more than a century, the echoes continuing to impact immigration patterns within the United States. The 2020 United Census showed that people who identify as Black make up 1% of Idaho, 2% of Oregon, and 4.3% of Washington – 13.4% of people in the United States identify as Black. For Atomwaffen, Western Washington was a fertile ground to recruit new members who grew up in a monocultural environment and saw everything wrong in the world shimmering in the Seattle skyline.

Cole's life was ordinary before becoming an Atomwaffen Division leader. He grew up in Everett, spent time in Bellingham, and eventually moved to Arlington. By 2015 he was already deeply radicalized and held neo-Nazi beliefs. Members of Atomwaffen practiced firing guns in the forests north of Seattle. In 2018 Cole and Aiden Bruce-Umbaugh, of Olympia, Washington embarked on a one-month trip to Germany, Poland, Ukraine, and allegedly Russia, where they had a purpose.

During that trip, Cole and Bruce-Umbaugh allegedly traveled to St. Petersburg and received combat training from RIM. The pair slipped into Russia through Ukraine using a green corridor in the Donbas. After completing Imperial Legion training, the pair traveled back through Ukraine, entered Poland, and visited the Nazi Concentration Camp Auschwitz. A picture was taken on the train tracks that lead to the extermination camp, Bruce-Umbaugh with a thumbs up and Cole pointing to the sky. Cole wasn't flashing a number one but referencing the extermination of ethnic Jews at the death camp and the ash and smoke rising from the incinerators.

The training in firearms, explosives, moving as a squad, and terrorist tactics were taken back to Washington state. At an abandoned cement factory in Concrete, members of Atomwaffen attended "hate camps" to train in guerilla and urban warfare and fire automatic weapons. Cole, despite never being in the United States military or having received any military training of public record, also set up a second "hate camp" in the Nevada desert near Death Valley.

Cole was also behind the editing and design of propaganda, posters, and slick recruiting videos. The scenes from "Devil's Tower," as the locals called the graffiti-covered ruins, closely resemble the videos made by Russian-proxy troops from Chechnya. The soldiers in those videos are called the "Chechen

TikTok unit” and create numerous videos of fighters shooting wildly at nothing and staging raids of empty buildings.

Atomwaffen members holding the organization’s flag during weapons training in Concrete, Washington In 2018, neo-Nazi posters began appearing at churches, government offices, and public areas in Kirkland, Redmond, and Bellevue. The posters and propaganda appeared across the region for almost two years. The content was never connected back to Atomwaffen, but the designs of some of the materials were similar. Emboldened by the sign campaign, Patriot Front also distributed materials in the suburban areas east of Seattle.

A 2018 investigation by ProPublica found Atomwaffen had cells in 23 states and was growing in influence and violence. By 2019 federal, state, county, and local authorities were increasingly concerned by Atomwaffen’s actions and rhetoric. Domestic terrorist experts believed that the language was moving from suggesting there should be a race war to purge the United States to discussing direct action. On September 26, 2019, a King County judge granted the Seattle Police Department’s request to issue an extreme risk protection order on Cole. In October, authorities seized five military-style rifles, three handguns, gun parts, and ammunition at Cole’s residence in Arlington.

Cole had an opportunity to have his guns returned at a hearing a couple of weeks later but instead fled to Montgomery, Texas, where he found refuge with Denton. The extreme risk protection order was automatically extended for a year because Cole defaulted by not attending the hearing. Because of Cole’s propaganda abilities and combat training, Denton allegedly made Cole the Texas leader of Atomwaffen. His tenure would be very short-lived, as Shea had already made a mistake and allowed an FBI informant to infiltrate the group.

Only days after arriving in Texas, Cole was involved in a November 4, 2019, traffic stop in the west Texas town of Post, with Bruce-Umbaugh in the passenger seat. Police found marijuana, concentrated THC, an AR-15, two AK-47s, a 9mm pistol, and 1,500 rounds of ammunition. The extreme risk protection order on Cole was flagged during the stop, but Bruce-Umbaugh claimed that the drugs and guns were his. Cole was behind the wheel of the blue Ford Focus with Washington plates, and despite this glaring discrepancy, Bruce-Umbaugh was arrested, and Cole was released.

A month later, the mistake was identified, and a warrant was issued for Cole’s arrest for unlawful possession of a firearm with bail set at \$20,000. Bruce-Umbaugh was unable to post bond for his release and languished in a west Texas jail cell, where authorities confronted him about a nascent Atomwaffen plot.

In November 2019, Shea had unknowingly contacted an FBI informant and invited the agent to join a budding operation to threaten journalists across the country. His goal was to “erode the media/states air of legitimacy by showing people they have names and addresses, and hopefully embolden others to act.” The informant worked with Shea on his plans and through conversations exposed other Atomwaffen members, including Cole, now hiding in the outskirts of Houston. An undercover agent visited Cole in January 2020, and in a sworn statement claimed the newly minted Atomwaffen Division leader of Texas was wearing a Klu Klux Klan robe.

Later that same month, Atomwaffen threatened a Seattle TV news reporter, the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League Pacific Northwest Chapter, and attempted to threaten a Florida reporter. In the Florida incident, the flyers were affixed to the wrong home.

On February 26, 2020, the group was unraveled by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. Operation Erste Saule arrested five members of Atomwaffen in four states. John Cameron Denton and Kaleb J. Cole were arrested in Texas. Cameron Brandon Shea was arrested in Kirkland, Washington, as he walked into a Fred Meyer grocery store to start his work shift. Also arrested were John Garza of Arizona and Tyler “Taylor” Parker-Dieppe of Florida.

Bruce-Umbaugh was also federally charged while he was still sitting in a west Texas jail cell. On February 3, 2020, he pled guilty to federal charges of possession of firearms and ammunition by a prohibited person.

Three months after Operation Erste Saule and the FBI investigation revealing the military training of Atomwaffen members in St. Petersburg, Russia, the United States Department of State designated the Russia Imperial Movement and members of its leadership as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. It was the first time the United States government had declared a white supremacist group a terrorist organization.

On April 6, 2020, Vorobyev, Nikolayevich, and Denis Garijev were designated as terrorists “for providing training for acts of terrorism that threaten the national security and foreign policy of the United States and being leaders of such a group.”

In September of the same year, National Counterterrorism Center Director Christopher Miller confirmed that United States members of the “extreme right” had traveled to Russia for military training. Testifying before Congress with FBI Director Chris Wray, Miller reported Americans have traveled to Russia to train with RIM and the Imperial Legion. He added that the relationship between extremists in the United States and RIM had remained casual and had not organized into cross-nation terrorism. Miller did not list the names of the organizations or individuals that had trained with the Imperial Legion during his testimony.

The Russian Federation does not consider RIM a terrorist organization. A Kremlin spokesperson defended the group and its military training of foreign fighters declaring, “We are also not going to prohibit foreigners from coming to visit their barracks or receive training. That is its purpose.”

Like many countries that identify as being formed by people with white ancestry, Ukraine has its own problem with neo-Nazi ideology. A lot of digital ink has been spilled about the history of the Azov Battalion and its founding members identifying with white supremacism and Nazi beliefs. While white nationalist extremists founded the Azov Battalion in 2014, the military unit slowly shifted its political alignment and views during the last six years. The early ranks were mostly filled with Russian-speaking residents of eastern Ukraine and were funded partly by Jewish businessperson and billionaire Ihor Kolomoyskyi. The group was colloquially called “The Men In Black” to counter Russia’s “little green men.”

Before the war in Ukraine, members of Atomwaffen were still within the ranks of the Azov Battalion. The battalion ejected the extremists from its ranks in 2020, including those with Atomwaffen.

When the Russia-Ukraine War started on February 24, Russian propaganda had turned the Azovs into mythical monsters while ignoring the thousands of ultranationalist neo-Nazis being trained and deployed to Ukraine under the watchful eye of DOSAAF. It used the group as justification to invade Ukraine for “denazification.” Despite the legends, the Azov Regiment had fewer than 3,000 troops, including Israeli foreign volunteers within the ranks. In May 2022, new insignia for the unit was introduced, wiping the last hints of its white nationalist founding.

While the Kremlin and the social media accounts it backs push a denazification agenda in Ukraine, it is estimated that several thousand members of the Imperial Legion are fighting in Ukraine, concentrated in Izyum and the Donbas. In an ironic twist, ultranationalist mercenaries with the Imperial Legion fought in Mariupol, likely against the Azov Battalion, to “denazify” Ukraine.

While the alleged atrocities of Azov are mostly limited to memes, propaganda, and disinformation, an internal report of the German Federal Intelligence Service BND claims that the Imperial Legion engages in destroying cultural icons that don’t align with the Russian Orthodox Church and tortures and executes Ukrainian prisoners of war.

Unlike Russia, all 50 states ban private militias that are involved in extremist activity or move their presence into the public domain. Despite these regulations, enforcement is almost non-existent. It is

estimated there are almost 300 private militias operating in the United States. They represent a fertile ground for recruitment to fight in Ukraine with Russian extremist organizations and Private Military Companies such as the Wagner Group. For those that survive, they bring back that experience, which can be applied to future domestic terrorism.

Kaleb James Cole was convicted of conspiracy, three counts of mailing threatening communications, and one count of interfering with a federally protected activity. On January 11, Cole was sentenced to 84 months in federal prison. Cole has been labeled a terrorist by Canada.

Cameron Brandon Shea pled guilty to one count of conspiring to commit three offenses against the United States: interference with federally-protected activities because of religion and one count of interfering with a federally protected activity because of religion. On April 25, Shea was sentenced to 36 months in federal prison.

Aiden Bruce-Umbaugh pled guilty to possessing firearms and ammunition by a prohibited person. On April 28, 2020, he was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison. While awaiting his sentencing in jail, he bragged to other inmates about his photo at Auschwitz and openly told others he was a Nazi.

John Cameron Denton was convicted of conspiracy and a hate crime for “swatting” over 130 people. Denton participated in a conspiracy that conducted swatting attacks between October 2018 and February 2019. Swatting is a harassment tactic that involves deceiving emergency dispatchers into believing that a person or persons are in imminent danger of death or bodily harm and causing the dispatchers to send police and emergency services to an unwitting third party’s address. Denton chose his targets motivated by racial hatred. On May 4, 2021, Denton was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison.

Johnny Roman Garza pled guilty to conspiracy to mail threatening communications, to commit stalking, and to interfere with federally protected activities. On September 8, 2020, he was sentenced to 16 months in federal prison.

Tyler “Taylor” Parker-Dieppe pled guilty to conspiracy to mail threatening communications, to commit stalking, and to interfere with federally protected activities. Taylor, who is transgender, uses he/him pronouns and goes by the name Tyler, was abused by his biological father and stepfather growing up. Growing up in Egg Harbor, New Jersey, he was so severely bullied in school for identifying as male, that he brought a lawsuit against the school and was paid a \$50,000 settlement. Parker-Dieppe fell into Atomwaffen when he was 15 or 16, and found a family within the group while hiding he is transgender.

As the only person in the Florida Atomwaffen cell that owned a car, he and another member drove to St. Petersburg, Florida to affix threatening posters on a journalist’s home, but went to the wrong house. After making the threat, Parker-Dieppe confessed to his mother what had happened and was afraid the group would learn he is transgender. He confessed his LGBTQIA status to Shea in Washington state and was kicked out of Atomwaffen.

On September 8, 2020, United States District Judge John Coughenour sentenced Parker-Dieppe to time served, saying he struggled with sentencing but given his history, “enough is enough.” Parker-Dieppe is now married and employed, and fears that he will be targeted for violence in the future.

Brandon Clint Russell pled guilty to one count of possessing an unregistered destructive device and one count of unlawful storage of explosive material. On January 9, 2018, he was sentenced to 60 months in federal prison. While awaiting sentencing in jail, Russell tried to send bomb-making information to members of Atomwaffen. He wrote in one letter, “I don’t care **how** long you put me in jail, your Honor, ... as soon as I get out, I will go right back to fight for my White Race and my America!” Russell will be eligible for release in January 2023.

Matthew Heimbach’s life and connections with the white nationalist movement fell apart in 2017. On March 2, 2016, Heimbach was caught on camera harassing and shoving a Black woman at a Donald Trump rally in Louisville, Kentucky. As the incident unfolded, then-candidate Trump yelled, “get her

out!” On May 17, 2017, Heimbach was charged with misdemeanor harassment. Heimbach called the charges “politically motivated” and said he “acted pursuant to the directives and requests of Donald J. Trump.” On July 20, 2017, Heimbach cut a plea deal. He was fined \$145 and sentenced to 90 days in jail for second-degree disorderly conduct. The sentence was suspended through a deferred adjudication agreement that required Heimbach not to get in further legal trouble for the next two years.

On March 14, 2018, Heimbach was arrested again for two counts of domestic violence assault against his wife, Jessica Parrott, and his father-in-law Matt Parrott. Ms. Parrott believed that Heimbach was having an affair, so she and her father set up a sting operation to confirm her suspicions. Her suspicion was well placed, but to the pair’s surprise, Heimbach was having an affair with his mother-in-law. Heimbach allegedly choked his father-in-law until he lost consciousness. Ms. Parrott told police that Heimbach “demanded that I tell the cops to leave,” kicked a wall, grabbed her face, and threw me face-first into a bed.” Despite violating his deferred adjudication agreement and being charged with two domestic violence assaults, bail was set for \$1,000.

On May 16, 2018, Heimbach was sentenced to 37 days in jail for violating his 2017 plea agreement. In a June 2018 hearing, the Parrotts did not want to pursue charges. After the 2018 domestic violence incident, the Traditionalist Worker Party, which Heimbach founded with Parrott, collapsed.

The neo-Nazi and white nationalist movements have rejected Heimbach, labeling him a traitor, informant, and a communist. In 2020, he stated he was done with identifying with white nationalism.

Heimbach was named a defendant in *Sines v. Kessler* in October 2017 due to the violence that erupted at the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally. Heimbach was found liable for civil conspiracy and ordered to pay \$500,000 in punitive damages.

James Mason still writes about Charles Manson, calls for violence against Jews, and his support of neo-Nazi ideals. He is currently considered the leader of Atomwaffen, an allegation he denies. Mason claims that Atomwaffen collapsed in 2020 after the arrests of key leaders.

Mason has a significant criminal record including a 1992 guilty plea of “illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented materials” after two police raids in 1988 and 1991 found child pornography in his home. He was fined \$500. In 1994 Mason was arrested again and charged with two counts of sexual exploitation of a minor and two counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Mason, who was 42 years old at the time, had threatened his Latina 16-year-old ex-girlfriend and her mother with a gun. He was sentenced to 36 months in prison.

Jared Taylor continues to lead the faux think tank American Renaissance. Taylor doesn’t view Jews as a threat to a new order. He severed his ties with Heimbach as he became more radicalized by RIM and Atomwaffen. In 2017, Taylor had a front-row VIP seat at the inauguration of President Donald Trump. Taylor is banned from traveling to 26 European Union nations that comprise the Schengen Area.

Richard Spencer’s life also fell apart in 2017. Spencer planned to hold a neo-Nazi march in Whitefish, Montana, in January 2017. Congressional Representative Ryan Zinke, Senator Steve Daines, Senator Jon Tester, Montana Governor Steve Bullock, and Montana Attorney General Tim Fox condemned the planned event. The community of Whitefish rallied to create a counterprotest, and the march never happened. Spencer became a pariah in Montana and was forced to move to an apartment in Virginia.

In 2014 while doing a speaking tour in Hungary, Spencer enraged Prime Minister Viktor Orban so much, that the right-wing leader pressed through legislation that banned Spencer – the Polish government passed a similar measure. In 2018 Spencer was detained in Iceland trying to enter Sweden and was forced to return to the United States due to his ban on travel in the Schengen Area.

Also, in 2018, his Russian-born wife filed for divorce, accusing him of being abusive in their marriage. Audio recordings and text messages sent to Nina Kouprianova threatened to break her nose and encouraged her to commit suicide.

Spencer was threatened with jail time in June 2020, owing more than \$60,000 to the guardian ad litem assigned to defend the interests of the two children he had with his ex-wife. He was also named a defendant in *Sines v. Kessler* in October 2017 and ordered to pay \$500,000 in punitive damages.

Stanislav Shevchuk was sanctioned by the United States Department of Treasury on June 15, 2022, for reaching out to individuals in the United States for the purpose of identifying racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists to support fundraising, training, and recruitment.

Russia Imperialist Movement – RIM does not support Russian President Vladimir Putin and his regime. Still, they see his policies and the war in Ukraine as a means to move their white nationalistic plan forward. It is believed several thousand mercenaries are part of the Imperial Legion fighting in Ukraine, the Central African Republic, Lybia, and Syria. The Imperialist Movement maintains Russian sanction training centers in St. Petersburg and Moscow (both in Russia). It is believed the Imperial Legion assists in training contract volunteers of the Russian army and forced conscripts of the DNR and LNR north of Izium, Ukraine. Imperial Legion fighters report directly to the Russian armed forces command structure and work cooperatively with the Russian Federation Armed Forces, DNR, and LNR separatists. They continue to train foreign fighters in combat and terrorist tactics worldwide with the blessing of the Kremlin.

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HEADLINE	07/05 Burkina Faso militant violence kills dozens
SOURCE	https://www.dw.com/en/burkina-faso-dozens-killed-in-militant-violence/a-62359770
GIST	<p>Islamist militants killed at least 22 people and injured several others in Burkina Faso, a government official said.</p> <p>"The cowardly and barbaric attack" occurred late Monday in several villages in the northwestern Kossi province, regional governor Babo Pierre Bassinga said in a statement.</p> <p>Bassinga said children were among the victims.</p> <p>A security official told AFP news agency that armed men attacked the village of Bourasso in Kossi overnight.</p> <p>Military forces have been deployed to the area and hosts are being organized to take care of people who fled to nearby cities, the statement added.</p> <p>In another attack on Saturday in northern Burkina Faso, 12 people died in Namissiguima commune in Yatenga province, another security source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>Islamist violence on the rise</p> <p>Burkina Faso's military ousted Burkina Faso's democratically elected president, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, this January, accusing him of not doing enough to stem growing militant Islamist violence.</p> <p>Even though a new government was formed this March, the violence has only increased.</p> <p>At least 135 people were killed in 12 militant attacks during the first two weeks of June, the Associated Press reported, citing an internal security report for aid workers.</p> <p>Burkina Faso's military recently said it would create two military zones to check violence.</p> <p>Burkina Faso has been battling an Islamist insurgency since 2015, led by groups like al-Qaeda and the "Islamic State."</p> <p>Since 2015, thousands of people have been killed and nearly 2 million displaced, according to the United Nations.</p>

HEADLINE	07/04 Amplify, accelerating domestic extremism
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/the-three-ps-of-amplifying-and-accelerating-domestic-extremism-in-the-united-states/
GIST	<p>The question of the rise of domestic extremism in the United States is one which is regularly commented upon by journalists, political pundits, and scholars of numerous academic fields. The data supports a sharp rise in hate crimes over the past five years, including those directed at Asian-Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Violent extremist groups that have existed in the United States for decades if not centuries like the Ku Klux Klan and National Socialist Movement continue to gain members and sympathizers but are increasingly joined at rallies and protests, and in violent crime, by newer groups like the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys. Notably, members of the latter two groups have been charged with seditious conspiracy for their actions during the January 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol; their violent attempt to keep former President Trump in power was one never seen since the end of the Civil War. What is it that has contributed to the observed rise in domestic extremism, in the United States in particular?</p> <p>Our own research, as well as that of others, has consistently shown that the making of a terrorist or violent extremist consists of four parts: the group, its violence-justifying ideology, social support for that ideology which may exist in one's local community or online, and individual needs and vulnerabilities. For those living outside of active combat zones, such as those becoming radicalized in the United States, those individual needs and vulnerabilities often include those for belonging, dignity, meaning, purpose, and significance. This "lethal cocktail of terrorism" is a psychosocial one which applies equally to violent extremists of all ideologies, whether they are militant jihadists, white supremacists, incel shooters, single-issue terrorists, or those on the far left. Presently, we present an additional model which applies to the broader social milieu in the United States and has brought about the recent rise of domestic extremism described above. This model may appear to be sociological or political in nature, yet each of its components can affect the individual psychology of any American. Under these conditions, the ingredients of the lethal cocktail are made all the more potent, and any American can be at risk for radicalization to violent extremism. We have entitled this lethal cocktail-amplifying model the "3P" model of domestic extremism.</p> <p>The first component of the 3P model is polarization. It is important to note that there is legitimate pushback against "both-sidesism" as well as some media outlets' portrayal as each side of a polarized argument being supported by approximately equal numbers of people (as a relevant example, 61 percent of Americans think that abortion should be legal in all or most cases). Nevertheless, it is clear that Americans are becoming more and more polarized, increasingly shifting their ideologies toward what may have been considered the fringes in decades past. The further away from one another Americans grow ideologically, the stronger and thicker the in-group/out-group boundary becomes. By this, we mean, Americans on opposite sides of the political spectrum see each other less and less as sharing common sacred values or even sharing a common reality and truth. This becomes even more relevant when social media algorithms and news outlets feed this polarization by creating echo chambers^[1] and isolating divergent views of reality and truth around issues, which are sacred for many. Whereas the boundary may previously have been blurred under the idea that everyone belongs to the greater in-group of Americans, talk of a "national divorce" indicates that the most polarized Americans view themselves as belonging to mutually exclusive groups, albeit with the same title. Indeed, extensive research has found that creating strict in-groups even based on the most trivial differences (i.e., the "minimal group paradigm") can induce preference for one's own group members and bias against if not outright animosity toward the out-group.^[2]</p> <p>The second component of the 3P model is propaganda. Propaganda, as well as mis- and dis-information, has been an important topic of discussion in considering American polarization and the rise of domestic extremism. Propaganda is certainly not unique to the 21st century but has been amplified through the advent of social media. Social media not only allows for the rapid spread of falsehoods across the country, but also for the enabling of echo chambers. People who get their news from social media will see the information posted by those they follow – typically, those with whom they already agree. They will also see the posts recommended to them by the social media platforms' algorithm which is designed not to present accurate, objective information, or both sides of an issue, but rather to present information which</p>

keeps the individual on the platform. Typically, this information is that with which the user agrees or that which [enrages the user](#), thus leading them to engage more with other users. After the main social media platforms found themselves used by ISIS for massive spread of their propaganda for terrorist recruitment and incitement these platforms found ways to carry out takedowns, but clearly social media continues as a hotbed of propaganda for many groups and a dangerous one: [36 percent of U.S. adults report that they get their news from Facebook. With some overlap, 23 percent of U.S. adults say that they get their news from YouTube, 15 percent from Twitter, and 11 percent from Instagram](#). Thus, at least one-third of American adults are taking what they see on social media to be factual information regarding current events without realizing they may have been funneled into an isolation and echo chamber, and many lack the media literacy skills to discern which so-called “news” stories are true, what the other side of the story could be, and which are designed to rile them up and make them feel scared and threatened. Given the aforementioned polarization, these individuals are apt to believe that which they hear or see from their own side of the political spectrum, particularly stories that portray those on the opposing side as deranged or dangerous. Such propaganda is often disguised as legitimate news but actually contains vicious conspiracy theories which appeal to the existing beliefs of the target audience and are designed to convince them that their sacred values are at risk.

In a polarized environment inundated with propaganda, the final component of an environment ripe for domestic extremism is **promotion of violence**. As previously mentioned, polarization includes the perception that one’s in-group does not share sacred values with those in the out-group, and propaganda is often designed to convince the reader or viewer that their sacred values are at risk. We use the term “sacred values” here intentionally. Anthropologist Scott Atran describes sacred values, defined as beliefs, whether religious or secular, held by a particular group which serve to bind the group’s members to one another through ritual or understanding that such beliefs are supernaturally ordained. These beliefs are also strongly emotionally evocative for those who hold them. According to Atran, “sacred values act as moral imperatives that inspire non-rational sacrifices in cooperative endeavors and war, generating outsize commitment in low-power groups to resist and often prevail against materially stronger foes” (p. 855).^[3] For example, those who have [killed doctors who perform abortions](#) believe that their actions are righteous because they believe that abortion is murder and that they are saving thousands of lives by committing such a crime. Similarly, those who attack [drag queens](#) or [pride parades](#) may believe that they are protecting children from pedophilia if they believe rhetoric which says that LGBTQ+ people are [“groomers.”](#)

When thinking about sacred values in the American context, it is easy to see how perceived threats toward such could inspire violence. Broadly speaking, America’s “European (i.e., white) heritage” is frequently used by far-right violent extremist groups as a sacred value which must be defended against immigrants (particularly from the Middle East or South and Central America) as well as from the threats of increased voting power of Americans of color. These claims by white supremacists of a [white genocide](#) or [white replacement](#) being orchestrated by enemies of white people can underlie violent actions designed to incite a [race war](#). For those who do not consider themselves to be racist or xenophobic, these threats about immigrants overtaking their country, as portrayed in the propaganda they see, can nevertheless ring true. In 2012, [Ronald Brownstein wrote for The Atlantic](#) that the American political landscape consisted of the “coalition of transformation” and the “coalition of restoration.” For those in the latter category, who had been served well by the status quo in the United States, those in the former group, who were advocating for systemic change, posed a threat to the America they knew and loved, one which prioritized the interests of white, straight, Christian men. It is clear to see the path from this perceived threat to white supremacist violence, including that committed under a slogan emblematic of “restoration”: Make America Great Again. This becomes dangerous when violence is promoted as the only way to defend their threatened sacred values. Similar promotions of violence in defense of sacred values can be seen among those who [bomb abortion clinics](#), those who [call for gun owners to defend their Second Amendment rights](#), and those who [massacre Jewish worshippers because they believe that Jews are orchestrating white genocide or white replacement with an invasion of undocumented immigrants across the southern border](#). Polarization has also been tied to the promotion of violence among those who ascribe to the Antifa ideology and movement, following such advice as “Punch a Nazi [or a MAGA] in the face,” engaging in serious property damage, engaging in street brawls, and arming themselves for street protests, all framed as defensive violence on behalf of Black lives, LGBTQ+ rights, abortion rights, etc.

[Numerous federal agencies](#) have made clear that [white supremacist domestic violent extremism has greatly surpassed the threats posed by militant jihadist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS as the largest threat to national security](#). The Department of Homeland Security has also [recently issued warnings](#) about counter attacks by far-left actors against [crisis pregnancy centers](#). Thus, although far-left attacks have historically been far less abundant and less lethal than those from those on the far right, it is clear that our 3P model can certainly be applied to domestic violent extremism of any ideology. For example, many on the liberal end of the political spectrum view bodily autonomy as a sacred value which has been violated by their out-group, represented by conservative Supreme Court justices, in the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. In the presence of propaganda which promotes violence as a means of protecting that sacred value, domestic extremism may fester – for instance, in the case in which [a man allegedly attempted to kill Justice Brett Kavanaugh after the decision was leaked](#) but before it was finalized. Similarly, even foreign actors have tried to exploit polarization and the sacred values of justice and dignity as held by supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement by using [propaganda promoting violence reportedly spread by agents of the Russian government](#).

To conclude, then, our 3P model can be considered one that describes the social context in which the lethal cocktail of terrorism is amplified and accelerated. When communities are polarized, they increasingly see those on the other side of any issue as being completely unlike them and opposing their sacred values. They are thus primed to believe the propaganda they see which portrays members of the outgroup as not only opposing, but actively threatening those values. When that propaganda and those who disseminate it promote the idea that violence can and should be used to defend their sacred values against such threats, individuals who ascribe to an ideology that is supported by their network, and have needs which they believe will be met through association with a violent extremist group, are likely to engage in domestic violent extremism. The 3P model in which the terrorism threat is both amplified and accelerated needs to be taken seriously if we wish to preserve our democracy.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Siege Culture, accelerationism in UK
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220704-siege-culture-and-accelerationism-in-the-u-k
GIST	<p>What follows is an introductory overview of Siege Culture, also referred to as accelerationism, as it has manifested in the U.K. from 2016 onwards. Although it is a fringe set of beliefs, Siege Culture has underpinned many of the recent counter terrorism cases linked to the extreme-right in the U.K. These introductory remarks do not assume any specialist knowledge beyond a broad understanding of the far-right.</p> <p>These remarks set out key beliefs in the Siege Culture subculture, before providing an overview of how the subculture is organized and has evolved over time. The remarks go on to consider the relationship between Siege Culture, violence, and offending, before speculating about potential future developments.</p> <p>Key Beliefs</p> <p>Siege Culture takes inspiration from Fascism & National Socialism. Siege Culture supporters have an anti-democratic, anti-enlightenment, and racist or ethnically motivated violent extremist (RMVE) worldview. They believe they are Aryans, a specific and superior group at the top of a racial hierarchy. They are hostile towards non-whites, non-heterosexuals, Jews, and governments. Siege Culture includes the idea of a The System, which is a conspiracy of the government, Jews, capitalists, and all other forces acting against Aryan interests.</p> <p>Within Siege Culture Fascism is treated as a higher truth and a natural state in which Aryans will dominate all others. As a result, Siege Culture advocates believes that any softening of their message to increase their appeal is impossible, and that any form of politics or compromise is inherently flawed. Siege Culture is critical of other right-wing actors who are seen as being insufficiently committed, resulting in a form of elitism and a belief that they represent a revolutionary vanguard with access to special truths unrecognized by others.</p>

Siege Culture argues that societies are in a state of involution: a period of decay caused by weakness. The eventual collapse of society and destruction of The System is considered inevitable. Collapse is a necessary precursor to the rise of the organic state and a return to natural hierarchy.

Accelerationism refers to a violent strategy in which terrorism is used to hasten societal collapse by provoking reactions from authorities and exacerbating existing social tensions. The term has come to be closely associated with Siege Culture to the extent that Siege Culture inspired groups are often referred to as accelerationists. However, accelerationism has also been a feature in the ideology of right-wing terrorists such as Brenton Tarrant and Peyton Gendron, who are less clearly related to Siege Culture.

Accelerationism has its origins in philosophy where it originally encompassed a range of beliefs centered on the desire to speed up technological progress, in some cases for benign ends. It is not clear how accelerationism came to be used to refer to a specific terrorist strategy or entered Siege Culture.

Although cultic influences have been a persistent feature on the fringes of the extreme-right, from 2016 onwards occultism has played a greater role in Siege Culture. In some cases, this has taken the form of Christian Identity, Esoteric Hitlerism, and other beliefs that align heavily with racism. Since 2017 Left Hand Path Satanism including the groups Order of the Nine Angles and Tempel Ov Blood, have also featured in Siege Culture. The incorporation of these ideas has been divisive and caused splits within Siege Culture online and in groups.

Performance is a key aspect of Siege Culture. Activists linked to groups and brands are conscious of how they present themselves and the impression they create. Militancy, hypermasculinity, firearms, and neo-Nazi symbols are key aspects of how they present themselves online and (on rare occasions) in public. Several key aesthetics have emerged from Siege Culture, most influential has been the work of Canadian propagandist Dark Foreigner.

Key texts associated with Siege Culture include:

- *Siege* by James Mason, originally composed in the 1980s *Siege* was re-popularized through the web forum Iron March and has been re-published multiple times.
- Several works published via Iron March or by key influencer Alexander Slavros including: *The American Futurist Manifesto*, *Next Leap*, *Zero Tolerance*, and *A Squire's Trial*.
- Material produced by online outlets which have included Noose, Siege Culture, and The American Futurist.

Organization and Development

Siege Culture is not a single ideology with a uniform set of beliefs. There are some important influencers such as James Mason and Alexander Slavros, but there is no acknowledged leader or single dominant personality.

The subculture is loosely organized. Some activists have founded small groups (sometimes referred to as groupuscules) which may meet in-person as well as having an online presence. Example of groups that have been active in the U.K. include Sonnenkrieg Division and Feuerkrieg Division.

Despite this, the center of the subculture is online. At various times this has included some key web forums (Iron March, Fascist Forge) and websites (Siege Culture, Noose, American Futurist). More recently Siege Culture persists on Telegram and other encrypted applications as well as less moderated platforms such as Odysee and Internet Archive. Online participation is far larger than offline participation and group membership.

The importance of online organizing for Siege Culture contributes to the lack of a uniform ideology as individual participants can integrate key ideas into their own worldviews (syncretism).

Online organizing also contributes to a strong transnational perspective. Ideologically a great deal of focus has been on the United States, but Siege Culture has been influential in the U.K., Canada, Australia, and Eastern Europe and Russia.

Siege Culture in the U.K. Is Not Static and Has Evolved Over Time

National Action was founded in the U.K. in 2013 and remained legal until proscription in December 2016. There is evidence that National Action members networked with others via the web forum Iron March as well as in person.

Siege, and author James Mason were promoted heavily on Iron March from 2016 onwards. This included the publication of an interview with James Mason carried out by members of Atomwaffen Division.

National Action were the precursors to the emergence of Siege Culture in the U.K.. Many of the groups that followed National Action in the U.K. such as Sonnenkrieg Division, and Feuerkrieg Division were much closer ideologically and aesthetically to the ideas in *Siege* and on Iron March. They also borrowed heavily from aesthetics and naming conventions established by Atomwaffen Division in the United States.

A similar pattern of spread can be observed in the emergence of esoteric beliefs, including Satanism, in U.K. groups. These trends primarily originated online and in the United States before being adopted by U.K. groups. These ideas were disruptive causing splits. As an example, Sonnenkrieg Division in the U.K. was spun out of an earlier group known as System Resistance Network as a result of a split over the role of Satanism.

Following a series of proscriptions and trials, Siege Culture activity has superficially died down in the U.K., although there is little reason to think that the networks and beliefs that underpinned these groups have disappeared.

Recent publications such as *Militant Accelerationism* suggest there is a concerted effort to circumvent convoluted ideological disputes and place offline organizing and direct action at the center of Siege Culture. The evidence so far is limited as to the effectiveness of these efforts.

Relationship to Violence and Offending

The relationship between Siege Culture and violence is complex. Militancy is a key element of how Siege Culture presents itself. To-date, clearly identifiable terrorist attacks associated with Siege Culture have been extremely rare.

In the US, the Siege Culture group Atomwaffen is linked to a series of murders, but these were of people already known to group members. In one case a former member killed two current members, and another member killed his girlfriend's parents. The 2018 murder of gay Jewish student Blaze Bernstein by Sam Woodward may have been ideologically motivated but there is little sign of attempting to use the murder for propaganda.

In the U.K., Zack Davies' attempted murder of Dr. Sarandev Bhambra may have been for a clear political motive and design to induce terror, but Davies' attack pre-dates the rediscovery of *Siege* and his relationship to Siege Culture and National Action is unclear. Davies erroneously believed Dr. Bhambra was a Muslim.

Siege Culture has produced some planned terror attacks in various stages of maturity. In the U.K., Jack Renshaw a former National Action member developed a plot to kill his local MP and a police officer investigating him. Jack Coulson, a member of National Action posted pictures of a pipe bomb online in 2017 and subsequently convicted of possessing a document for terrorist purposes. Members of the Siege Culture-influenced cell Oaken Hearth have attempted to manufacture 3D printed firearms.

Overall, plotting activity, and actual violence coming from Siege Culture have been far outstripped by online rhetoric and overall presentation. Siege Culture has however contributed to the large upsurge in right-wing terrorism offending in the U.K. The proscription of National Action in 2016 was a watershed moment and the numbers of right-wing terrorist offenders in prison, many convicted of membership offences, began to rise from 2017 onwards. Members of successor organizations such as Sonnenkrieg Division have been convicted of terrorism offences including encouraging terrorism.

Next Steps

Siege Culture has largely been suppressed in the U.K. Several branded groups connected to Siege Culture have been proscribed and the large number of cases linked to this subculture has diminished. A similar picture can be seen in the US, where Atomwaffen and The Base have both been dissolved or weakened.

Despite proscription, the online subculture and networks that underpin Siege Culture are persistent. Over time, new formations influenced by Siege Culture may emerge: Oaken Hearth is a key example of this in the U.K.

There is also a persistent effort within Siege Culture to re-orientate activism away from branded groups vulnerable to counter-terrorism disruption, and towards more local and offline organizing.

Ideological introspection became a key feature of Siege Culture as debates over the role of Satanism and the fall out of increased state pressure took their toll. This may have contributed to the overall inertia of Siege Culture and recent publications have sought to place renewed emphasis on direct action.

Conclusions

Siege Culture is the most extreme interpretation of fascism and national socialism yet seen. Militancy and ‘edginess’ are a core part of the scene’s aesthetic.

The militant presentation of Siege Culture has drawn focus and scrutiny. However, the rhetoric has outstripped the violence emanating from the scene so far, especially compared with the more terroristic chan/alt-right inspired lone actors, such as Brenton Tarrant, internationally.

The decentralized nature of Siege Culture has left it vulnerable to ideological drift and introspection, including rifts caused by the influence of occultism. Recent efforts have attempted to correct this by de-centering ideology and emphasizing the need for offline organizing and direct action. It is currently not possible to say if these efforts have been successful at encouraging more direct action.

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HEADLINE	07/02 FBI probing criminal reaction Roe ruling
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/fbi-is-investigating-criminal-reaction-to-ro-e-ruling-as-potential-domestic-terrorism-110044428.html
GIST	<p>The FBI is investigating ideologically motivated “suspicious criminal or potentially violent” reactions to the reversal of Roe v. Wade as potential acts of domestic terrorism, according to documents obtained by Yahoo News, prompting concerns from civil liberties experts that pro-abortion-rights Americans will be swept up in the FBI’s dragnet for exercising their First Amendment right to protest.</p> <p>On June 24, the Supreme Court issued its long-anticipated ruling in a Mississippi case, Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, that the Constitution does not guarantee a right to abortion. The decision touched off a wave of protests across the U.S. from both pro- and anti-abortion demonstrators.</p> <p>Ahead of the decision, the FBI’s criminal and counterterrorism divisions issued guidance to law enforcement across the country warning that the Roe ruling could incite or inspire criminal activity by people on both sides of the abortion issue.</p> <p>The bureau urged state and local law enforcement to report back any crimes or instances of abortion-related extremist ideology in their communities that could also be investigated as potential federal crimes, according to the June 22 guidance, a copy of which was obtained by Yahoo News.</p> <p>The FBI also plans to investigate potential violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act and other federal civil statutes, according to the bulletin. The Justice Department could then add federal charges against people charged with local crimes — from vandalism to violence — in response to the</p>

decision. The bulletin gives examples of criminal activity from both sides of the abortion issue that occurred in response to the leak of the Roe decision.

The bulletin provided a list of threat indicators for law enforcement to use to determine whether to report certain incidents to the FBI for review and potential investigation.

Among the indicators are “expressing violent and threatening extremist rhetoric,” “articulating a moral justification for partaking in or threatening criminal, violent activity” and “soliciting information pertaining to reproductive health care physicians and staff.”

The FBI guidance to state and local law enforcement comes in what experts call the most complex and volatile threat environment this country has seen in decades. But it also raises questions about the FBI’s collection of information on — and the surveillance and investigation of — Americans exercising their constitutional right to protest.

The five-page bulletin details criminal acts from both sides of the abortion debate that occurred in various cities around the country since early May, [when a draft of the Supreme Court decision](#) was leaked.

Earlier this week the FBI sent police its domestic terrorism reference guide for “abortion-related violent extremism” — a category that includes both “pro-life” and “pro-choice” extremists, according to a copy of the reference guide obtained by Yahoo News.

The guide notes that “historically, the majority of the threat of violence emanates from pro-life extremist lone offenders,” and also states that certain threat indicators could be constitutionally protected conduct.

According [to data from the National Abortion Federation](#) — cited in an FBI bulletin produced by its San Diego field office in May — on violence and disruption toward abortion providers, from 2019 to 2020, incidents of arson rose from one to five; assault and battery incidents increased from 24 to 54; death threats or threats of harm rose 200% and incidents of vandalism rose from 70 to 80.

This data was not included in the June 22 FBI guidance, which says the threat is coming from both sides and focuses largely on providing indicators of ideological motivations. This could give police reading the bulletin the wrong impression about which side is more likely to be violent and affect how police respond to protests in their area, said Mike German, a fellow with the Brennan Center and former FBI agent.

“Because now any police department who receives this, as we’ve seen in the streets ... can use this as an opportunity to go target pro-choice groups because they look at any kind of disruptive activity like marches and sit-ins as terrorism [and] they tend to overreact to those incidents,” German said.

In both its guidance and in a statement to Yahoo News, the FBI has insisted that it cannot launch investigations solely based on protected speech or activity.

“We focus on individuals who commit or intend to commit violence and criminal activity that constitutes a federal crime or poses a threat to national security,” an FBI spokesperson said. “The FBI investigates only when someone crosses the line from expressing beliefs to violating federal law.”

But civil liberties and legal experts worry that the FBI’s request for state and local ideologically motivated criminal or potentially violent activity could lead to the collection of information on protesters with strong beliefs on abortion.

“I think this may become a fishing expedition, but the FBI is also not wrong that there’s a high likelihood of violence around this issue,” said Amanda Shanor, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who is an expert in First Amendment and constitutional law.

“My concern is that, whatever the FBI’s initial goals, this may lead to a program that surveils people and organizations with strong views on reproductive rights [or abortion] based on their First Amendment protected activities,” she said.

Shanor added, “Despite what the report says — that the FBI doesn’t investigate, collect or maintain information on U.S. people for the purpose of monitoring their First Amendment activity — it may invite their law enforcement partners to do that.”

John Cohen, former counterterrorism coordinator at the Department of Homeland Security, which circulates similar guidance to law enforcement partners across the country, acknowledged that “there’s proximity between protected speech and threat-related activity.”

“The job of DHS Intelligence and Analysis or law enforcement is not to focus on protected speech,” he told Yahoo News, “it’s to discern that which is protected speech from that which is threat-related activity, and in order to do [that] there has to be very clear guidance. ... If not, you run [the] risk of law enforcement paying attention to people who are engaged in constitutionally protected activity in advocating their beliefs on a public policy issue.”

In the days following the Roe v. Wade decision, law enforcement has [clashed with pro-abortion-rights protesters and journalists](#) in cities like Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

On Thursday, more than 180 people [were reportedly arrested at a pro-abortion-rights rally](#) near the Supreme Court, including Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif. At an evening pro-abortion protest in Phoenix after the ruling, Arizona authorities deployed tear gas and flash-bang grenades on thousands of demonstrators around the state Capitol, [Yahoo News reported](#).

After the draft decision leaked on May 2, Yahoo News reported on [the initial flurry of intelligence products](#) circulated immediately after the opinion, alerting authorities to the possibility of violence and civil unrest once the official ruling was released.

Since then, Yahoo News has obtained more than two dozen alerts, analyses, threat assessments and other law enforcement and intelligence products related to potential and credible threats and criminal activity related to or in response to the Roe decision. In the days since the official decision was released, law enforcement officials in New York, Orange County, Calif., central Florida, Washington state, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Los Angeles have produced intelligence products detailing acts of vandalism or graffiti in their areas and analyzing potential targets.

Hours after the decision, the Department of Homeland Security circulated a bulletin warning of a likely increase in domestic violent extremism activity in response to Roe.

“Some domestic violent extremists (DVEs) will likely exploit the recent US Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe V. Wade to intensify violence against a wide range of targets,” the DHS bulletin says. “We expect violence could occur for weeks following the release, particularly as DVEs may be mobilized to respond to changes in state laws and ballot measures on abortion stemming from the decision.”

DHS said federal and state government officials, [including judges](#), and factories are most at risk.

“As illustrated in the FBI bulletin, a growing number of localities across the nation have experienced violence and/or destructive behavior by both those who oppose and support abortion,” Cohen said. “Here is the bottom line: The threat environment is volatile and complex.”

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HEADLINE	07/04 Iran-Hezbollah drone threat escalating
SOURCE	https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-711029

Israel's downing of three drones on Saturday illustrates the growing nexus of Iran-Hezbollah threats in the region – and specifically the Lebanese terrorist organization's escalating attempts to target gas platforms off the coast of Israel.

Over the last several years, [Iran has rapidly expanded its drone program](#) and encouraged its proxies in the region to develop their own drone technology. These drones are often kamikaze ones, meaning they have a warhead and are designed to fly into their target. The drone threat against Israel has emerged slowly, in stages, over the last several years. Hezbollah has been using drones for many years, but they are increasingly more sophisticated and the threat is growing.

Back in 2014, the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College detailed some of the past history of these threats.

The article by Dan Gettinger and Arthur Holland Michel noted that “much of Hamas and Hezbollah's unmanned technology derives from or originated in Iran, which has maintained an active military drone program since the Iran-Iraq War.”

It notes that back in 2004 an “Iranian-made drone operated by Hezbollah managed to fly in Israeli airspace for five minutes before it crashed into the Mediterranean sea. The 2.9 meter long UAV was not picked up on Israeli radars.

“The incident prompted the Knesset to convene a hearing with the IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon.”

The report also noted that in “April 2005, a Misrad-1 UAV reportedly entered Israeli airspace, conducting an 18-mile (30 km.) reconnaissance flight over cities in the Galilee region.” During the 2006 war, Hezbollah launched more drones. These included a drone packed with explosives that targeted a ship. One of the drones even had 30 kg. of explosives, according to reports.

Drone capabilities in the Middle East

Hezbollah, Hamas and other Iranian backed groups have increased their drone threats in recent years. This included incidents in 2010, 2012 and 2014. The 2012 incident was particularly important because reports at the time said Tehran had attempted to spy on Israel's Dimona facility using a drone.

The overall picture that emerges is that by 2018 Hezbollah and Iran – along with the [Iranian-backed Houthis](#) in Yemen, Iranian-backed militias in Syria and a large number of militias linked to Iran in Iraq – all had drone capabilities.

[The UAVs shot down on Saturday](#) appear to be of several different types. It is unclear if they carried explosives and how they were controlled. They do not appear to have been linked together to act as a kind of drone swarm.

In 2019 Iran used drones and cruise missiles to attack Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq facility. It also operationalized Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq to target Saudi Arabia using drones.

Iran moved drone technology to the Houthis in Yemen who have launched numerous drone attacks against Saudi Arabia over the years. In January, the threat grew to include attacks on the UAE.

Hezbollah has about 2,000 UAVs

The Alma Research and Education Center said in December 2021 that, “in the special report we published on December 21, we stated that we estimate that today Hezbollah has approximately 2,000 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). Over the past 15 years, there has been a huge increase in the number of Hezbollah's UAVs.”

Iran has increasingly used its militias in Iraq and Syria to target both the Kurdistan autonomous region in Iraq and US forces in Iraq and Syria using drones.

In October 2021, Iran also used drones in southern Syria to target the Tanf garrison where US forces are present. Last July, Iran used drones to target a commercial ship in the Gulf of Oman, killing two sailors on the bridge of the Mercer Street tanker.

This illustrates the growing and rapidly expanding regional threat of drones.

In February 2018, Iran lifted the veil on the drone threat by using a drone flown from T-4 base into Israeli airspace. It was shot down near Beit Shean. In August 2019 Iran sent Hezbollah “killer drone” operatives to a safe house in southern Syria to target Israel. Israel struck the operatives.

In March 2021, Israel used F-35s to down Iranian drone threats over Syria. Then Iran used a drone flown from Iraq in May 2021, which entered Israeli airspace near Beit Shean and was shot down.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz has warned of the growing threat. In September 2021 he noted that Iran was training drone operators at its Kashan base and mentioned “terror operatives from Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon [trained] in flying Iranian-made UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles).”

Last November, Gantz revealed Iranian drone bases in Chabahar and on Qeshm Island. In February, Iran flew drones from Iran over Iraq to target Israel. They were shot down by the US-led coalition.

On February 17, Israel said it downed a drone flown by Hezbollah. The terrorist group claimed in February that one of its drones flew into Israeli airspace for half an hour. Israel activated Iron Dome and scrambled jets at the time.

In March, foreign reports, including by Al-Mayadeen, said Israel had destroyed hundreds of drones in Iran. On May 17 the IDF said it had downed another drone belonging to Hezbollah.

On June 9, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah threatened Israel’s gas platforms off the coast. “The immediate objective should be to prevent the enemy from extracting oil and gas from the Karish gas field,” Nasrallah said. Hezbollah wants to stop a potential maritime agreement, backed by the US, between Israel and Lebanon. Syria also blamed Israel for an airstrike on Saturday in Tartus.

Israel's efforts to combat the drone threat

The downing of the drone illustrates Israel’s abilities in detecting drones and also Israel’s investment over the years in technology to down them. These include the use of warplanes and Barak surface-to-air missiles, and equipping Israel’s latest corvette ships with the best systems to detect and stop drone and missile threats.

Israel has increased the abilities of Iron Dome to stop these types of threats as well. In addition, the Jewish state continues to carry out the campaign between the wars to prevent Iranian entrenchment in Syria. However, the overall context is that Iran is increasing the range of its drones, which are proliferating all over the region.

Last year it is believed that Iran moved Shahed 136 drones to Yemen. These may have a range that enables them to strike Eilat.

In addition, Tehran increased its investment in Iraqi-based militias such as Kataib Hezbollah to increase their drone and missile threats.

Israel is increasing its work with US Central Command and Navcent, as well as with new partners in the Gulf to discuss air defense priorities and drone threats.

The drone threat on July 2, therefore, is part of the much wider Iranian threat, and ties into the importance of Israel’s work with the US, UAE, Bahrain and other countries in the region to prevent destabilization.

	The US is increasingly concerned about Iranian drone threats. Members of Congress have also worked on the Deterring Enemy Forces and Enabling National Defenses (DEFEND) Act and the Stop Iranian Drones Act. All of this is important in the context of Hezbollah's recent escalation.
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HEADLINE	07/03 Afghan clerics demand world recognition
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/03/meeting-of-afghan-clerics-ends-with-silence-on-education-for-girls
GIST	<p>A gathering of thousands of Afghan clerics and elders has ended with a call for international recognition, but silence on the country's ban on secondary education for girls.</p> <p>Nearly a year since their surprise military triumph across Afghanistan, not a single country has officially recognised the Taliban as the legitimate government.</p> <p>Diplomats say the ban on girls' education is one of the main reasons the Taliban are still international outcasts. It is resented by many in the movement's ranks, who want their own daughters to be educated.</p> <p>Classes were set to restart in March, until a last-minute reversal, apparently on the orders of hardliners close to the supreme leader of the movement, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada.</p> <p>The all-male group of religious and community leaders spent three days discussing the future of the country, largely united under Taliban rule after decades of civil war. There had been hope they might offer political incentives or cover for the Taliban leadership to reverse course on the ban. But only two out of more than 4,500 participants called for the reopening of secondary schools for girls, Afghanistan's Tolo television channel reported.</p> <p>And in their final communique, the clerics made only passing reference to the need for "religious and modern education" and to respect "the rights of women". It did not clarify if those rights include schooling.</p> <p>"It's hard to get too excited about vague references to education and women's rights at the end of the Taliban's big meeting when the Taliban previously made a very clear promise to reopen all schools only to break that promise," said Heather Barr, associate women's rights director at Human Rights Watch.</p> <p>"Donors, diplomats and the UN need to act as though this ban is likely permanent ... It's far past time for the international community to respond to their gender apartheid in ways more tangible than statements of deep concern."</p> <p>Akhundzada came to Kabul from his base in the southern city of Kandahar to address the gathering. It was his first known trip to the capital since Taliban fighters seized it last August.</p> <p>He lashed out at foreign demands on the government, as the UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet called for an end to "systematic oppression" of women in the country. Women are blocked from working in most sectors outside health and education, require a male guardian for long-distance travel and have been ordered to cover their faces in public.</p> <p>The meeting was closed to media but in an audio recording Akhundzada, a hardliner whose son was a suicide bomber, warned the international community against interfering in Afghanistan.</p> <p>"Thank God, we are now an independent country. [Foreigners] should not give us their orders, it is our system and we have our own decisions," he said, according to the official Bakhtar news agency.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/04 Arson 90yrs ago led to MLB in Seattle?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/sports/mlb/mariners/arson-fire-90-years-ago-major-league-baseball-seattle/281-31a4deed-279d-44f1-9bab-749bd267bf77
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — If we told you the Seattle Mariners were sparked from an actual spark, would you know the story?</p> <p>If we told you the fire of a fanbase was rooted in an actual fire, would you know who to thank?</p> <p>You have to go back 90 years ago to July 4, 1932.</p> <p>"Not a lot of people I think are aware of it now," Seattle baseball historian Dave Eskenazi said. "The further back you go, the more interesting it is and Dugdale is certainly a major, major part of our early baseball history."</p> <p>Dugdale was both a person and a park.</p> <p>Daniel Dugdale was a former professional baseball player from the midwest.</p> <p>He came to the northwest in 1898 because of the Klondike Gold Rush; he got rich off real estate in Seattle; and he built a baseball stadium for the minor league Seattle Indians.</p> <p>The stadium was both a cathedral and a catastrophe waiting to happen.</p> <p>"On July 4th, 1932, after a doubleheader at the ballpark around midnight calls started coming in for a fire at the ballpark," Eskenazi said. "(It) turned out to be a three-alarm fire that burned it to the ground. They thought it could be an errant cigarette. They thought it could be the firework show on the 4th of July that went awry and caused it. They didn't find out until three years later that it was actually arson. His name was Robert Bruce Driscoll."</p> <p>Driscoll was targeting America's past time, on America's day, perhaps because of an unfulfilled American Dream.</p> <p>"He felt beaten down by the world," Eskenazi said. "He was unemployed, he was homeless, he slept in boxcars."</p> <p>Driscoll would confess to over 140 fires in Seattle, according to records from the fire department, saying he did it "because of my destitute circumstance and because I was sore at the world in general."</p> <p>"Driscoll used some of these discarded programs he found outside the stadium along with some wood and some kindling to start the fire," Eskenazi said.</p> <p>But Driscoll did not just start a fire. He started a series of events that would lead to Major League Baseball (MLB) coming to Seattle.</p> <p>"You can make the case that the burning of Dugdale Park did change our baseball history for the positive," Eskenazi said. "Not initially, because the Seattle Indians then had to play their games at Civic Field, which was not even a baseball park. But this led to the team being sold to Emil Sick and the building of Sick's Seattle Stadium on the same site as the burned down Dugdale Park. This was the home of the Seattle Rainiers who were one of the most successful and popular minor league teams in history."</p> <p>Their success was leveraged into a consolation prize and then the ultimate prize.</p>

	<p>"If not for the Seattle Rainiers, perhaps we never would've had the Seattle Pilots, the first Major League team in 1969," Eskenazi said. "Which led directly to the Seattle Mariners."</p> <p>One generation's tragedy led to another generation's triumph.</p> <p>"There's a through-line and a thread where if Dugdale Park didn't burn down, we may not have had Major League Baseball," Eskenazi said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Unprecedented change Europe fire regime
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220703-unprecedented-change-in-europe-s-fire-regime-driven-by-climate-change
GIST	<p>A study reveals an unprecedented change in the fire regime in Europe which is related to climate change.</p> <p>The affected areas are in Southern, Central and Northern Europe but this historical change in Europe's fire regime is more intense in the Mediterranean area. The study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, is led by Jofre Carnicer, lecturer of Ecology at the Faculty of Biology, and member of the Biodiversity Research Institute (IRBio) of the University of Barcelona and the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF).</p> <p>Spring and Summer Seasons with a High Fire Risk</p> <p>The study detected summer and spring seasons with unprecedented values of fire risks over the last years, so many areas of southern Europe and the Mediterranean are reaching extreme conditions conducive to fires. These adverse conditions are becoming more frequent due to the increasing heatwaves and hydrological droughts.</p> <p>"This increase in extreme fire risk is quite recent and at critical times it exceeds the fire-fighting capabilities of European societies, causing higher CO₂ emissions associated with fire in extremely hot and dry summers", notes Carnicer, first author of the study and member of the Department of Evolutionary Biology, Ecology and Environmental Sciences of the UB.</p> <p>Forests and Carbon Sinks, Threatened</p> <p>The study links the increase in fire risk to a higher number of fire-induced CO₂ emissions measured in satellite observations over the European continent. This phenomenon is occurring the Mediterranean Europe but also in the colder, northern and boreal Europe, which has important carbon sinks in the tundra and boreal forests.</p> <p>The fire risk and impacts estimates based on meteorological data and satellite detection of fire impact have changed over time. This is the first time the recent increase in fire risks due to weather conditions is detected and it translates into a significative increase in fire-associated CO₂ emissions in periods of extreme heat and danger of fires in summer.</p> <p>"Forest and mountain areas in the southern and central Europe are the areas where the highest fire risks are detected", notes Carnicer. "These areas are large carbon sinks that would be threatened by the fire, such as the Pyrenees, the Iberian and Cantabrian massifs in Spain, the Alps, the French central massif, the Italian Apennines in central Europe, the Carpathian Mountains, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Pontic in the southeast area of Europe".</p> <p>The study provides continental maps of fire danger and predicts the evolution of the fire risk in Europe until 2100, through different trajectories of climate change (2°C, 4°C) and reduction of CO₂ emissions.</p> <p>"The conclusions suggest the fire regime could rapidly change in regions affected by climate change, such as the Mediterranean, Euro-Siberian and boreal areas of Europe", notes the researcher.</p>

“The most significant increase in fire risk will affect the areas in southern Europe that have forests and carbon sinks which are key for the regulation of climate”, says the expert, and adds that “the forests in the European continent absorb about 10% of the total emissions from greenhouse gas emissions annually. Specifically, they capture around 360 million tons of CO₂ per year, more than the emissions of a country like Spain, with a value around 214 million tons”.

The increase in fire risks described in the study is a challenge to the development and application of the new European Forestry Strategy, which proposes to maintain an annual reduction of at least 310 million tons of CO₂ from the forestry and agricultural sectors by 2030 in Europe. As a consequence, the detected increase in fire risk could jeopardize decarbonization strategies based on forest and land uses if effective forest management strategies are not adopted to reduce these risks”, highlights Carnicer.

“Moreover, the increase in this risk could promote a mechanism of positive feedback on climate change, in progressive cycles of warming, increased fire danger, and higher fire-induced CO₂ emissions. In this context, reducing the CO₂ emissions drastically in the next two decades (2030-2040) is key to reach a lower risk of fires in Europe and worldwide”, notes the author of the study.

Carnicer is a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and of the National Committee for Climate in Spain (CNC). He is one of the authors of the Sixth Assessment Report by the Working Group II at IPCC, presented in February 2022, which revealed the impacts of climate change in the ecosystems and societies worldwide, the expected environmental and social risks for the upcoming decades, and the available adaption options to reduce the impact of climate change.

Among the authors of the study are distinguished climatologists, experts on forest fire risks and forestry ecology, members of an international consortium of research institutions in which the UB, CREA the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), Institute for Environmental Research and Sustainable Development of the National Observatory of Athens, the European Space Agency (ESRIN), the University of Salento (Italy), and the University of Patras (Greece) –take part.

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HEADLINE	07/04 EV owners flipping cars like houses
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/ev-demand-is-so-hot-that-tesla-owners-are-flipping-their-cars-like-houses/
GIST	<p>Dennis Wang lost money on his first try, but then he learned from his mistakes.</p> <p>On his second effort as an electric vehicle flipper, Wang made \$4,000. On his third, he hit what he considered the sweet spot, a \$7,000 profit. All the deals involved Teslas that Wang bought and resold, flipping them like tickets to a hot concert.</p> <p>“I have a Model S currently that I’m probably going to sell within another three months, pending the market,” Wang said. “I also have another Model Y and a Model X on order.”</p> <p>Buying and reselling stuff is as old as commerce itself, complete with cautionary tales and questionable legality. House flipping has become so alluring that multiple reality TV shows hype the process and personalities involved.</p> <p>Now a new breed of flipper has emerged hoping zero emissions equal big profits. Helping them is an unusual confluence of factors plaguing EV manufacturers (supply chain problems, semiconductor shortages, unmet production goals, an emerging scarcity of lithium batteries) as well as car shoppers (record fuel prices, high used car prices, long waiting lists for electric vehicles).</p> <p>Some like Wang, a 33-year-old automotive buff with mad spreadsheet skills, have learned that they can flip cars, with a recent emphasis on electric vehicles. Some EV flippers are finding buyers willing to pay sometimes exorbitant sums, tens of thousands more than the retail price, to acquire the vehicles.</p>

Consider the person trying to sell a practically new 2022 Hummer EV1 for \$220,000 on Facebook. It had been retailing for less than half of that, at \$105,000.

Also on Facebook are two 2022 Rivian R1T electric adventure vehicles listed for \$123,000 and \$220,000. On the Rivian website, the same vehicle starts at \$67,500. Buyers on Cars & Bids, an online auction site, could find them listed for \$97,000 and \$103,000. Although the more outrageous asks for double to triple the value of some EVs are either ignored or severely flamed online, some less lofty listings are having success.

Cars & Bids, for example, lists 14 recent sales of the R1T, between April 12 and June 28, for prices that ranged from \$106,000 to \$138,000.

In June, Tesla raised the price of its Model Y by 5%, to \$65,990, but that hasn't stopped the flippers. A Model Y with less than 2,800 miles was recently up for sale on Edmunds for \$70,995. Edmunds considered that a "good price," at \$1,739 "below market," as in what the market says such a car is worth.

Eddie Gribust, who makes a living outfitting Mercedes-Benz Sprinter [vans for off-grid use](#), recently unloaded the Tesla Model Y he'd used as the family car for nine months.

Gribust was so excited about the sale — the buyer flew from Las Vegas to Boise, Idaho, for the transaction — that he posted a YouTube video titled: "[Flipping my Tesla for \\$5,000 profit! Here's How.](#)"

"Since my business is buying and selling these Sprinters, I'm aware of things like the microchip shortage," Gribust said. "And everybody has been talking about how the secondary market especially has grown 20 to 30%.

"I was about to order a [Tesla] Model X and the Cyber Truck. The delivery times were nine months to a year, and that would obviously signal high demand, and therefore, low supply. From there, it was taking advantage of simple economics."

Former Securities and Exchange Commission Chief Economist [Larry Harris](#) teaches that exact lesson to students at USC's Marshall School of Business.

"When supply and demand are not in alignment, you get these opportunities where clever people can take advantage," Harris said. "We've seen this in all kinds of markets. When prices change significantly for scarce goods, some buyers realize that the item has a greater value to others than it does to them, and they will sell to the people willing to pay more than they would, and profit from it."

Or, as Gribust put it in his video, after expressing regret about giving up the Tesla, "I have a simple rule: If somebody places profit in your hand, all you have to do is close that hand and walk away."

Recurrent, which tracks the used EV market and provides car shoppers with [independent reports on EV performance and battery life](#), noted in its [most recent market evaluation](#) that 2021 used EVs "make up a surprising 17.5% of inventory."

The Seattle startup found that used EVs had climbed 25% in price since March 2021. On average, it said, a 2021 Mustang Mach E was selling for 60% more than it was last year. Citing what it called "the new normal, inflated prices are here to stay," Recurrent said that the used EV sales trend was skewed heavily toward the most recent model years available.

"Anecdotally, we've heard of many owners who sold pretty new cars to dealers and made back more than their purchase price, and the numbers show this makes sense," Recurrent said. "Reselling a barely-owned car works differently for different cars. In terms of Teslas, the price of new vehicles increased so much last year, and waiting periods are so long for new vehicles, that the value of used cars skyrocketed."

If you've got a relatively new EV, Recurrent's advice is to jump into the game now.

"If you are an EV owner or a dealer, now is as good a time as any to list a used EV. Since we speculate that prices will not change much in the coming months, by holding on to your car, you risk higher inventory flooding the market."

If you're one of the many hoping to obtain an EV, "it may not pay to wait for prices to come down," Recurrent said.

The restrictions on flipping an EV depend on where you live.

In France, where flippers have been reselling nearly new EVs for a profit of \$10,000 or more, the government in June changed its energy code to prevent the immediate resale for profit of electric vehicles purchased using state incentives. EV owners must now keep their cars for a year before reselling.

Germany has a six-month hold on reselling EVs but is considering an increase to a yearlong wait starting in 2023.

In the U.S., several states limit how many cars — EV or not — a person can buy and resell in a year before needing a [vehicle dealer license](#), which in California requires taking an online course, passing a DMV-administered test, paying fees and meeting other requirements. The states are trying to [protect consumers from car thieves and unscrupulous sellers](#) and protect auto dealers from street-level competition.

Most EV flippers can't do high-volume sales because it takes too long to get the cars in the first place. In terms of enforcement, according to California DMV investigations offices, the agency's main targets are those running volume sales without a license or a car-selling lot. Still, it will pay — no pun intended — to play by the rules; breaking them can result in fines and possible imprisonment, based on the severity of the case.

Los Angeles resident Wang, a digital marketing consultant for the automotive industry who said he is getting a license to sell, said he's heard about several EV buyers on waiting lists already negotiating to sell them upon delivery. Some want an even quicker buck, he said.

"I've heard of some people transferring their reservation into your name for a price," Wang said. "There's ways to do it, but it's like super hard."

It's also possible to aggravate the golden goose here. Wang recently posted a [video](#) on his YouTube channel citing examples of people who appeared to be banned from buying new Teslas because they were reselling them too soon and too often.

As far as cars are concerned, Wang is a love 'em and leave 'em kind of guy.

Although his recent focus is EVs, Wang has flipped several dozen cars over the years, at first buying them off Craigslist and doing minor upgrades before selling them. Of course, he remembers the first car he flipped — the car and the profit, exactly.

"It was a Lexus ES 300. I bought it for \$3,000 and sold it for \$4,000," Wang said.

Wang insists he really doesn't do it for the money; he just wants to drive as many cool cars as he can.

"Life is about experiences, right? I like cars. And so it just really fulfills my enjoyment of being able to drive a bunch of different kinds," Wang said. "Before this, I used to work for BMW, and I had 20 BMWs at different times. So it's the same thing I'm just doing with Tesla."

Wang said his best customers are car dealers.

	<p>“I sold one to a private buyer, then I realized that dealerships would just cut you a check, and that’s even easier” than a private sale, Wang said.</p> <p>His advice for would-be car flippers?</p> <p>“Don’t pay for a lot of add-ons if it’s not a car you’re going to keep,” he said, “and don’t wait too long to sell it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Brazil's record Amazon deforestation
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/04/americas/brazil-amazon-record-deforestation-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Brazil's Amazon rainforest has been deforested by a record amount in the first half of 2022, according to the country's Space Research Institute (INPE).</p> <p>Data from INPE satellites shows that 3,750 square kilometers (1,448 square miles) of the world’s largest rainforest were lost in Brazil between January 1 and June 24, the largest area since 2016, when the institute began this type of monitoring.</p> <p>INPE satellites have been registering new monthly deforestation records since the beginning of the year, and it also registered a record 2,562 fires in the country’s Amazon last month.</p> <p>May and June generally mark the beginning of significant annual burning and deforestation in the Amazon, due to the dry season.</p> <p>In May, INPE detected 2,287 fires in the rainforest, the highest number for that month since 2004.</p> <p>Destruction of the world's largest rainforest has surged since President Jair Bolsonaro took office in 2019 and weakened environmental protections, arguing that they hinder economic development that could reduce poverty in the Amazon region.</p> <p>Though the President has passed several executive orders and laws to protect the rainforest, he has simultaneously slashed funding to government-run environmental protection and monitoring programs, and pushed to open indigenous lands to commercial farming and mining.</p> <p>In October 2021, a group of climate lawyers urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Bolsonaro for his alleged attacks on the Amazon, which they said amount to "crimes against humanity."</p> <p>But the Brazilian president has pushed back against international critics pushing for better protection of the rainforest.</p> <p>At the beginning of May, Bolsonaro lashed out at Leonardo DiCaprio, saying it would better for the actor to "keep his mouth shut" after he spoke out about the environmental importance of the Amazon.</p> <p>Some scientists predict deforestation will continue to rise ahead of Brazil's October presidential election, as it has ahead of the last three elections.</p> <p>Environmental enforcement typically weakens in election years and criminals may rush to deforest ahead of a new government taking office, according to Carlos Souza Jr, a researcher at Imazon, a Brazilian research institution.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Hot dog champ keeps title holding protester
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/2022/07/04/joey-chestnut-nathans-fourth-july-hot-dog-eating-contest/7802371001/

GIST	<p>Joey Chestnut may have dramatically entered Monday's Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest walking on crutches. But after another stirring performance before the Coney Island crowd, Chestnut had enough fans ready to carry him off the stage he just dominated – once again.</p> <p>Chestnut's ruptured tendon injury, combined with a series of personal setbacks including the recent loss of his "first coach" mother, Alicia, didn't deter the 38-year-old champion, who devoured 63 hot dogs in 10 minutes Monday at the annual Independence Day event. Despite falling short of his own record of 76 dogs eaten last year, Chestnut put on another clinic to claim the Mustard Belt, out-eating second-place finisher Geoffrey Esper (47½ hot dogs).</p> <p>Chestnut, who goes by "Jaws," has now won seven in a row and 15 of the last 16 hot dog eating contests since taking down six-time defending champion Takeru Kobayashi in 2007, with his only loss in 2015 to Matt Stonie.</p> <p>In his storied career, Chestnut has now eaten a record 1,152 combined hot dogs. It's become a regularity for Chestnut to not necessarily battle others, but his own world records from previous years' competitions.</p> <p>Chestnut told USA TODAY Sports prior to his win Monday: "Most athletes have two kinds of primes. Their first prime is when their body is the best. I've passed that prime. The second prime is when their mind and knowledge is at its best, where you know your body and how to practice less but be just as prepared. I'm there now."</p> <p>In the women's division earlier in the day, Miki Sudo reclaimed her title after taking a year off for pregnancy. The 36-year-old, despite sporting a wrist injury, ate 40 hot dogs and was just short of her own personal-best of 48.5 franks.</p> <p>A bizarre incident unfolded early on in the men's competition when a protestor rushed the stage to bump into Chestnut, who then responded by putting the protestor in a mini chokehold before security rushed the person off and then Chestnut went back to his eating.</p> <p>After two years of being moved from its signature location in Brooklyn's Coney Island due to COVID-19 restrictions, this year's contest finally returned to the corner of Surf and Stillwell Avenues at Nathan's Famous restaurant in Coney Island. The crowd of thousands was in full force to take in the Independence Day holiday and cheer on the hot dog eaters, with multiple contestants revving up the crowd – a luxury that hadn't been there fully since 2019. The annual hot dog eating contest has still been held – rain or shine – every year since 1916.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/02 Summer: hotter, longer, more dangerous
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/02/summer-2022-climate-change-heat/
GIST	<p>Wildfires had been burning for weeks, shrouding Reno, Nev., in harmful smoke, when Jillian Abney and her eight-year-old daughter Izi drove into the Sierras last year in search of cleaner air. The eerie yellow haze that filled the sky had brought summer to an abrupt halt, canceling all of the season's usual delights.</p> <p>Abney headed for Donner Lake, hoping the higher elevation would put them above the smoke. But instead of the blue skies that had greeted her on countless trips throughout her life, she arrived to find smoke hanging in the sky and creeping through the valleys below. It smelled like a campfire, but those had been banned for the season.</p> <p>"If it's like that again this August, we are escaping," she said.</p> <p>Summer temperatures in Reno have risen 10.9 degrees Fahrenheit, on average, since 1970, making it the fastest warming city in the nation during the hottest months, according to an analysis by the nonprofit research group Climate Central. For two consecutive summers, smoke from blazes burning in California</p>

has choked the region, sending residents to the emergency room, closing schools and threatening the tourism industry.

It is among the sharpest examples of how climate change is fundamentally altering the summer months — turning what for many Americans is a time of joy into stretches of extreme heat, dangerously polluted air, anxiety, and lost traditions.

Though the summer season of 2022 is young, parts of the nation already have experienced punishingly high [temperatures](#), extreme drought, [wildfires](#), severe storms, flooding or some combination. Projections from federal agencies suggest more abnormally hot weather, an expansion of drought and well above average wildfire and hurricane activity in the months ahead.

Scientists say the recent spate of severe summers is a clear change from previous generations. The average summer temperature in the past five years has been 1.7 degrees (0.94 Celsius) warmer than it was from 1971 through 2000, according to a Washington Post analysis of data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But some parts of the country have been much harder hit, with the West showing a 2.7 degrees (1.5 Celsius) increase.

“The past few summers, we’ve just seen such a constant parade of one climate-related event after another,” said Kristina Dahl, principal climate scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, an environmental advocacy group. “This really does strike us as a point where we need to be shifting our thinking about summer and how we are approaching it.”

Summer has always been a turbulent season, a time of checking weather forecasts and watching the skies. And despite the major shifts that have taken place, many people still relish the season. Vacationers still flock to places that now face some degree of wildfire or flood risk. But climate change is increasingly pushing summer to extremes, creating inhospitable conditions and endangering lives.

While these climatic shifts are occurring year-round nationwide — in fact, in many areas, it’s getting warmer faster during other seasons — the summer is often when the effects cascade. The temperatures are higher, so any increase may be felt even more strongly. And people are more likely to spend extended time outside, exposed to the elements.

Across the country, heat waves are arriving more frequently, more intensely and earlier in the year. Nights are warming at a slightly higher rate than days in most parts of the United States, according to the most recent [National Climate Assessment](#), harming people’s ability to cool down after hot days. A Climate Central [study](#) found that in just more than half of cities analyzed, high-heat days arrived at least a week earlier, on average, than 50 years ago. Three-fourths of places had more “[extremely hot](#)” days.

In the West and Southwest, the wildfire season is lengthening, and a historic drought is emptying reservoirs. On the East Coast, hotter-than-usual temperatures are contributing to more severe flooding and heavy downpours. As hot weather arrives, the nation’s electric grid [is under growing strain](#), with regulators from the Midwest to the Southwest warning of rolling power outages this summer.

This year, the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center’s three-month outlook through September suggests there will be hotter-than-normal temperatures throughout much of the country, with a punishing heat dome building over the western and central U.S. in coming days.

As heat bakes the country, drought is expected to grip parts of the nation’s Corn Belt and the Middle Mississippi Valley. The country is also facing the likelihood of another active wildfire season and the seventh straight above-average Atlantic hurricane season.

Global warming is driving the shift to hotter summers, experts say, but urban growth is also to blame. The three fastest-warming cities — Reno, Las Vegas and Boise — are expanding outward. As new homes are built and more asphalt is poured, these cities are absorbing and retaining more heat than the undeveloped

land around them, said Nevada state climatologist Stephanie McAfee. Scientists call this the urban heat island effect.

“Increasingly, Las Vegas is seeing nights where it’s only cooling into the upper 80s,” McAfee said. “There are people in Southern Nevada who are doing the calculus of keeping the air conditioning on versus making budget cuts.”

The consequences of scorching daytime temperatures and nights without relief were on vivid display last year, when a [historic heat wave](#) in the Pacific Northwest sent temperatures climbing more than 30 degrees higher than average. Portland broke records three days in a row, peaking at 116 degrees. According to official estimates, the heat wave killed nearly 200 people in [Oregon](#) and [Washington](#).

“Our imagination for what the impact could be has been completely changed,” said Steven Mitchell, medical director of the emergency department at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

“So many of us saw a career’s worth of heat stroke and heat illness in a matter of hours,” Mitchell said. “We began to treat it like a multi-casualty event.”

Those hit hardest, he said, were the most vulnerable — the very old, the very young and low-income residents who had the least access to cooling.

“On the hottest day, we had more calls to our 911 system than at any time in the history of the 911 program,” Mitchell said. “A huge portion of those were for heat-related impacts.”

These days, the hospital and others in the area are working to prepare for the next severe heat wave. Mitchell said he attends a weekly check-in call with hospitals in the region to make sure they have a plan to prevent any one facility from getting overwhelmed. And he said hospitals are working more closely with emergency responders to improve monitoring for a rise in heat-related cases.

Summertime in the Pacific Northwest has always been referred to as “trauma season” by hospital staffers, Mitchell said, because more people are on vacation, outdoors and more likely to get injured. But the prospect of extreme heat has added another dimension of worry.

“It just strains our system more than it already is,” Mitchell said. “There is a certain amount of trepidation as we move into the summer months.”

Researchers have found that some heat waves in recent years, including the one that struck the Pacific Northwest last year, would have been virtually impossible without human-caused global warming.

“We can start saying people are dying because of climate change,” said Kristie Ebi, a professor of global health at the University of Washington. “This is really shifting the kinds of statements we can make.”

In other parts of the Southwest, communities are bracing for the prospect of flash floods.

In Flagstaff, Ariz., a gateway to the Grand Canyon and other local attractions, summer signals the arrival of the monsoon season.

But the rains, which would typically be welcome in a region suffering from drought, have lately inspired anxiety and fear. Last year, heavy rainfall over recent wildfire burn scars sent torrents of water, mud and debris into the city, damaging homes and forcing residents to evacuate.

This year, the Tunnel Fire, a fast moving wildfire, swept through the Coconino National Forest in April, fueled by high winds and a years-long drought. More than 700 homes were evacuated. Another wildfire burned about 26,500 acres just six miles north of the city last month.

“It’s a totally different environment out there these days, and it’s not like it’s going to get back to normal anytime soon,” said Flagstaff City Manager Greg Clifton. “This community is remarkably resilient, but you have to wonder how far that resiliency can go.”

As he spoke late last month, Clifton was driving through a neighborhood fortified with piles of sandbags. City officials had issued a news release urging people living near the recent wildfires to immediately buy flood insurance. Once again, Flagstaff was preparing for an unpredictable wet season, not knowing if the rains would be gentle or would wash away the roads.

For the last several years, some cities in the West have replaced their Fourth of July fireworks displays with shows put on by drones equipped with color-changing lights over concerns about fires. Flagstaff is switching to a laser light show this year. Elsewhere, fire officials are urging people not to set off fireworks at home.

Barbeque restrictions have also become commonplace, as have summertime bans on campfires in national forests during dry, breezy weather.

The cascading effects of climate change have also left their mark on summer camp, a cherished ritual for millions of Americans.

In the Northeast and parts of the Midwest, rising summer-time temperatures and increasing rainfall have caused camp directors and summer youth program organizers to worry about heat stress, higher utility bills and flooding, in addition to the usual scrapes and bruises.

Stephanie Koch, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City, said increasingly volatile weather is stretching her organization’s budget. In the last two years, the club has purchased flood insurance for two of its three buildings for the first time — it couldn’t afford to insure the third.

It is seeking donations to cover the cost of water bottles for about 300 campers, as well as soaring electricity bills from energy price spikes and having to run the air conditioning more often. Training for camp staff now includes conversations about flexibility and patience with schedule changes.

“I’m third generation to this area and I’ve seen incredible changes,” Koch said. “When you live on a barrier island, you’re focused on weather all of the time. But now it’s a matter of asking: Where are you going to be located? What buildings do you need flood insurance on? My own house was damaged by Hurricane Sandy and is now 12 feet off the ground.”

On the shore of Lake Tahoe, the University of Nevada, Reno offers a sleep-away 4-H camp that has embraced a sense of cautiousness. Last year, the Caldor Fire, a huge blaze that became the 15th largest in California’s recorded history, burned more than 200,000 acres near the lake. The group had to cancel one program and reschedule another.

Kenny Haack-Damon, the state’s 4-H Camp education program coordinator, said campfires have become a thing of the past. Instead, campers build solar ovens, using cardboard boxes lined with tin foil to cook their s’mores. He said the biggest challenge is to figure out which outdoor activities can still be done safely, and which lessons might best be taught indoors.

“The point of camp is to be outside as much as possible,” Haack-Damon said. “It’s hard to think about what that’s going to look like as things get warmer or wildfires become more of a threat.”

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HEADLINE	07/02 Monthly car payments at record \$700
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2022/07/02/1109105779/monthly-car-payments-record-700
GIST	Cars have long had their own special place in America.

The wide open roads, the wind in your hair, the feeling of freedom when you drive. Cars have been celebrated in movies and eternalized in songs for evoking all that.

And right now, that feeling of freedom comes with a pretty hefty price tag. The average monthly car payment crossed \$700 a month earlier this year, the highest on record, according to Cox Automotive/Moody's Analytics.

"I joke with people that every new car purchase is a luxury car purchase, I don't care what you're buying," says Ivan Drury, senior manager of insights at the car buying expert Edmunds.

However, cars aren't just a symbol of freedom.

In fact, they play an essential role in the economy. People rely on cars to get to work — 3 out of 4 Americans commute to work by car. Then there's school drop-offs, doctors appointments, grocery shopping and more.

And yet, for more and more Americans owning a car is becoming unaffordable.

"Unfortunately for the segment of the population that probably needs it the most, it's getting more and more out of reach," Drury notes.

Indeed, that high dollar figure doesn't even account for insurance or parking for those who have to pay for it. Not to mention gas prices that crossed \$5 a gallon recently and are still hovering near these record levels.

There's also no end in sight in an era when interest rates are rising and the cost of borrowing will likely go up even more.

What's causing prices to spike?

The primary reason cars have gotten so pricey can be traced back to the computer chip shortage that started during the pandemic.

When car sales dropped dramatically during the early parts of the lockdown, auto manufacturers slashed orders for the chips.

Around the same time, as schools and work went online, people bought additional laptops, iPads, TVs, video games and other electronic goods for their home. So chip manufacturers shifted their production to serve those companies.

Automakers are making more expensive cars

This was soon followed by other big shifts in the economy. People started moving out of crowded cities into suburban locations, and suddenly demand for cars skyrocketed.

Auto manufacturers were caught flatfooted and unable to make enough cars because they didn't have enough microchips, which play a big role in today's cars, controlling everything from windows to the navigation screen to even passenger seat sensors.

With a limited supply of chips, automakers cut back and made fewer cars. They decided to put their chips into making bigger, more expensive vehicles — SUVs loaded with features — to get more bang for their buck.

That also means that automakers have been making fewer compact cars and sedans, the more affordable vehicles.

The average cost of a new car has topped \$47,000

The result is that prices have climbed to astronomical levels. The average cost of a new car is hovering at the highest level on record, topping \$47,000 a pop.

Drury says get used to these prices: "We're not going to see a sudden drop-off in price anytime soon, because there doesn't seem to be any resolution for the chip crisis."

And used cars? Forget it. They're just as unaffordable

Those who have sought respite by buying used cars are also facing sticker shock.

Used car prices have shot up even more dramatically than new car prices, up 16.1% from a year ago compared to a 12.6% jump in new car prices.

Johnny Navarro experienced that sticker shock firsthand after a recent car accident. No one was hurt, but his car was totaled. When he went to the dealership, he found monthly payments had doubled for cars he'd looked at only a few years earlier.

"To see it jump from like \$300 to \$600 for a Corolla or Civic was like, I should be driving like a Mustang for that much money, you know?" Navarro said incredulously.

But people still love their cars

After a lot of shopping, Navarro found a used Lexus online. His car payment came out to \$580 a month, over \$200 more per month than he used to pay. That's before adding in his insurance bill and parking fees in downtown Los Angeles, where he lives.

"I'm definitely gonna have to probably pick up a shift or two more a week," Navarro says, referring to his job as a server at a restaurant in Santa Monica, Calif. Driving cuts his hourlong commute in half, but it's not the only reason he got the car.

"I just like to ride in my car with friends and listen to music. I actually have a carpool karaoke microphone," he says. "That's always really fun."

Navarro is like a lot of Americans — he loves his car. For as long as he can afford it, he's going to own one.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/05 Arrest: Chicago-area parade mass shooting
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/07/05/illinois-parade-shooting-robert-crimo/6171657018584/
GIST	<p>July 5 (UPI) -- The man who police believe opened fire from a rooftop during a Fourth of July parade near Chicago on Monday -- killing several people -- remained in custody on Tuesday and officials are still piecing together the holiday attack.</p> <p>Robert Crimo III was cornered by police in North Chicago late on Monday after a brief pursuit, hours after police say he opened fire on a July 4th parade in Highland Park from a rooftop. At least six people were killed and dozens of others were wounded.</p> <p>Authorities announced after the arrest that Crimo was a "person of interest" in the case and that he was in custody. They did not specify what led to Crimo and authorities, including the FBI, are still asking for tips and information.</p> <p>Police told reporters at a news conference late on Monday that Crimo, 22, was responsible for the shooting attack. It was unclear when he could face official charges.</p>

"This individual is believed to have been responsible for what happened and the investigation will continue," Lake County Major Crime Task Force spokesperson Christopher Covelli said according [to CNN](#). "Charges have not been approved yet at this time -- and we are a long way from that."

Crimo also went by the name Awake the Rapper and has posted various music across his social platforms. Also found on some of the platforms attributed to him were varying images of violence, including cartoonish drawings depicting gun violence.

Crimo's social profiles have since been deactivated.

[CNN reported](#) that Crimo had created music clips with foreboding lyrics and animated scenes of gun violence. One video showed a cartoon animation of a stick-figure shooter in tactical gear carrying out an attack with a rifle.

In another video, the stick-figure character was lying face down on the floor in a pool of blood surrounded by police officers with their guns drawn.

The [Chicago Tribune reported](#) that another video included a voice-over that said, "I need to just do it, It is my destiny."

"Everything has led up to this. Nothing can stop me, not even myself," the voice-over said. "It is what I've been waiting for in the back of my head, ready to be awakened. It's what I was sent here to do, like a sleepwalker walking steadily with my head held high, like a sleepwalker walking blindly into the night."

[NBC News reported](#) that Crimo had his own channel on the message board Discord, where followers praised him after the shooting. The platform was shut down late on Monday. Crimo had previously posted frequent messages there, which included graphic depictions of murder, suicide and death.

Crimo's father, Robert Crimo Jr., ran for mayor of Highland Park in 2019 but lost to incumbent Mayor Nancy Rotering.

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HEADLINE	07/04 A.I. to predict crime, biased policing?
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-07-04/researchers-use-ai-to-predict-crime-biased-policing
GIST	<p>For once, algorithms that predict crime might be used to uncover bias in policing, instead of reinforcing it.</p> <p>A group of social and data scientists developed a machine learning tool it hoped would better predict crime. The scientists say they succeeded, but their work also revealed inferior police protection in poorer neighborhoods in eight major U.S. cities, including Los Angeles.</p> <p>Instead of justifying more aggressive policing in those areas, however, the hope is the technology will lead to “changes in policy that result in more equitable, need-based resource allocation,” including sending officials other than law enforcement to certain kinds of calls, according to a report published Thursday in the journal Nature Human Behavior.</p> <p>The tool, developed by a team led by University of Chicago professor Ishanu Chattopadhyay, forecasts crime by spotting patterns amid vast amounts of public data on property crimes and crimes of violence, learning from the data as it goes.</p> <p>Chattopadhyay and his colleagues said they wanted to ensure the system not be abused.</p> <p>“Rather than simply increasing the power of states by predicting the when and where of anticipated crime, our tools allow us to audit them for enforcement biases, and garner deep insight into the nature of the (intertwined) processes through which policing and crime co-evolve in urban spaces,” their report said.</p>

For decades, law enforcement agencies across the country have used digital technology for surveillance and predicting on the belief it would make policing more efficient and effective. But in practice, civil liberties advocates and others have argued that such policies are informed by biased data that contribute to increased patrols in Black and Latino neighborhoods or false accusations against people of color.

Chattopadhyay said previous efforts at crime prediction didn't always account for systemic biases in law enforcement and were often based on flawed assumptions about crime and its causes. Such algorithms gave undue weight to variables such as the presence of graffiti, he said. They focused on specific "hot spots," while failing to take into account the complex social systems of cities or the effects of police enforcement on crime, he said. The predictions sometimes led to police flooding certain neighborhoods with extra patrols.

His team's efforts have yielded promising results in some places. The tool predicted future crimes as much as one week in advance with roughly 90% accuracy, according to the report.

Running a separate model led to an equally important discovery, Chattopadhyay said. By comparing arrest data across neighborhoods of different socioeconomic levels, the researchers found that crime in wealthier parts of town led to more arrests in those areas, at the same time as arrests in disadvantaged neighborhoods declined.

But, the opposite was not true. Crime in poor neighborhoods didn't always lead to more arrests — suggesting "biases in enforcement," the researchers concluded. The model is based on several years of data from Chicago, but researchers found similar results in seven other larger cities: Los Angeles; Atlanta; Austin, Texas; Detroit; Philadelphia; Portland, Ore.; and San Francisco.

The danger with any kind of artificial intelligence used by law enforcement, the researchers said, lies in misinterpreting the results and "creating a harmful feedback of sending more police to areas that might already feel over-policed but under-protected."

To avoid such pitfalls, the researchers decided to make their algorithm available for public audit so anyone can check to see whether it's being used appropriately, Chattopadhyay said.

"Often, the systems deployed are not very transparent, and so there's this fear that there's bias built in and there's a real kind of risk — because the algorithms themselves or the machines might not be biased, but the input may be," Chattopadhyay said in a phone interview.

The model his team developed can be used to monitor police performance. "You can turn it around and audit biases," he said, "and audit whether policies are fair as well."

Most machine learning models in use by law enforcement today are built on proprietary systems that make it difficult for the public to know how they work or how accurate they are, said Sean Young, executive director of the University of California Institute for Prediction Technology.

Given some of the criticism around the technology, some data scientists have become more mindful of potential bias.

"This is one of a number of growing research papers or models that's now trying to find some of that nuance and better understand the complexity of crime prediction and try to make it both more accurate but also address the controversy," Young, a professor of emergency medicine and informatics at UC Irvine, said of the just-published report.

Predictive policing can also be more effective, he said, if it's used to work with community members to solve problems.

	<p>Despite the study’s promising findings, it’s likely to raise some eyebrows in Los Angeles, where police critics and privacy advocates have long railed against the use of predictive algorithms.</p> <p>In 2020, the Los Angeles Police Department stopped using a predictive-policing program called Pred-Pol that critics argued led to heavier policing in minority neighborhoods.</p> <p>At the time, Police Chief Michel Moore insisted he ended the program because of budgetary problems brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. He had previously said he disagreed with the view that Pred-Pol unfairly targeted Latino and Black neighborhoods. Later, Santa Cruz became the first city in the country to ban predictive policing outright.</p> <p>Chattopadhyay said he sees how machine learning evokes “Minority Report,” a novel set in a dystopian future in which people are hauled away by police for crimes they have yet to commit.</p> <p>But the effect of the technology is only beginning to be felt, he said.</p> <p>“There’s no way of putting the cat back into the bag,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 Europol arrests 130 human traffickers
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/130-human-trafficker-suspects-arrested-eu-wide-crackdown-2022-07-05/
GIST	<p>AMSTERDAM, July 5 (Reuters) - Police across Europe have arrested about 130 people suspected of involvement in human trafficking in a joint operation carried out by 22 countries, the international police agency Europol said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The police actions, which took place in the week up to June 13, also led to more than 100 possible victims of human trafficking being identified, Europol said.</p> <p>During the operation, coordinated by the EU border agency Frontex, checks on almost 1 million persons and 200,000 vehicles were carried out at sea, land and air borders, mainly on heavily utilised routes into Europe.</p> <p>Fifteen countries from across the EU participated in the actions, alongside Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, Britain and Liechtenstein. About 22,500 law enforcement officers took part.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Virginia police: 4 shot Manassas area
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/07/04/four-shot-manassas-virginia-wounded/
GIST	<p>Four men were shot late Sunday in the Manassas area of Prince William County, police said.</p> <p>All four were hospitalized with wounds not thought to be life-threatening after the incident in the 8100 block of Sudley Road, police said. The wounded men were between 23 and 26.</p> <p>Shots were fired about 11:50 p.m. after an argument broke out at a large gathering in a parking lot, according to police.</p> <p>Police said no “active threat” to the community existed.</p> <p>The incident was under investigation Monday, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Federal Way police arrest 3 in shooting
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SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/three-arrested-after-19-year-old-shot-in-federal-way
GIST	<p>FEDERAL WAY, Wash. – A man is in critical condition after a shooting in Federal Way.</p> <p>Police say they were called just after 10 pm to the 33400 block of 35th Ave. SW, with reports of a 19-year-old who was shot.</p> <p>The victim was found and officers kept him alive until Fire and Medic teams were able to rush him to the hospital, where he was listed last as in critical condition.</p> <p>Witnesses at the scene said they saw a vehicle speed off and another officer in the area saw it and proceeded to pull it over.</p> <p>There were three people, two men and one woman, inside. They were all arrested and officers say they could see what they believe to be was a handgun. The vehicle was impounded.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Sacramento club shooting: 1 killed, 4 hurt
SOURCE	https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/1-killed-4-wounded-in-shooting-outside-sacramento-nightclub/
GIST	<p>One person was killed and four were wounded in a shooting early Monday outside a nightclub in downtown Sacramento, police said.</p> <p>Police Chief Kathy Lester told the Sacramento Bee that authorities received a call about shots fired shortly before 2 a.m. on Monday after a club let out patrons.</p> <p>The four wounded people were taken hospitals, she said. The victims were not immediately identified.</p> <p>“What we know now is very limited,” Lester said.</p> <p>Police did not immediately disclose any information about a suspect or suspects and messages seeking comment were not immediately returned.</p> <p>Lester said police are seeking witnesses to come forward with additional information about the shooting. They asked people to submit possible video evidence.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Nation’s 309th mass shooting this year
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/highland-park-fourth-of-july-parade-shooting-was-nations-309th-this-year/ar-AAZca3X
GIST	<p>To date this year, there have been on average 11 mass shootings per week, the nonprofit Gun Violence Archive’s data show. The group classifies an incident as a mass shooting when four or more people, excluding the shooter, are shot or killed.</p> <p>At least six people were killed and 30 or more wounded Monday when a gunman rained bullets down upon an Independence Day parade in an affluent suburb about 25 miles north of downtown Chicago. The gunman, who as of Monday afternoon was still at large, found his way to a rooftop to wreak his havoc as hundreds of people, including parents with strollers and kids on bikes, fled the scene.</p> <p>On Monday evening, police identified 22-year-old area resident Robert Crimo III as a person of interest. He was driving a silver 2010 Honda Fit, and cops said he should be considered armed and dangerous.</p> <p>Highland Park Police Commander Chris O’Neill urged people to shelter in place as police sought the killer in a “very active apprehension effort.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 Climate protesters glue selves to painting
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/style/article/just-stop-oil-hay-wain-london-climate/index.html
GIST	<p>Two climate activists glued themselves to a 200-year-old masterpiece at London's National Gallery on Monday, the latest in a string of disruptive protests by British environmentalist group Just Stop Oil.</p> <p>The pair covered John Constable's famous landscape painting "The Hay Wain" with a modified version of the image before sticking their hands to its frame.</p> <p>The demonstration comes just a day after five Just Stop Oil activists disrupted Formula 1's British Grand Prix by sitting on the Silverstone racetrack. Last week also saw members of the group gluing themselves to the frames of paintings in London, Glasgow and Manchester, including Vincent van Gogh's famous "Peach Trees in Blossom."</p> <p>Completed in 1821, "The Hay Wain" is among Britain's best-known artworks. Depicting the Stour river, which divides the English counties of Suffolk and Essex, it is considered one of Constable's quintessential paintings.</p> <p>The protesters' modified version saw the river replaced with a paved road, with factory smokestacks depicted in the background and airplanes flying overhead.</p> <p>Just Stop Oil, which is calling for the UK government to block licenses for future oil and gas extraction, has since identified the demonstrators as students Hannah Hunt and Eben Lazarus. London's Metropolitan Police confirmed to CNN that two people had been arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and were later released on bail pending further inquiries.</p> <p>In a video of Monday's incident, posted to Just Stop Oil's Twitter account, Lazarus, a 22-year-old music student, can be heard telling onlookers that the "reimagined" version of the painting "shows the destructive nature of our addiction to oil."</p> <p>"I want to work in the arts, not disrupt them," he is heard saying. "But the situation we're in means we have to do everything non-violently possible to prevent the civilizational collapse that we are hurtling towards."</p> <p>The National Gallery said the painting had been removed from view following the incident and has since been examined by conservators.</p> <p>"'The Hay Wain' suffered minor damage to its frame and there was also some disruption to the surface of the varnish on the painting -- both of which have now been successfully dealt with," the gallery told CNN in a statement, adding that the painting will be back on display from Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Founded in early 2022, Just Stop Oil has embarked on several high-profile protests in recent months. In March, a Premier League soccer match was halted when a demonstrator tied himself to one of the goal posts.</p> <p>Last month, four of the group's supporters covered the exterior wall and steps of the UK government's Treasury headquarters with red paint.</p> <p>In a press release issued by the group on Monday, 23-year-old Hunt said the protests would only end when "the UK government makes a meaningful statement that it will end new oil and gas licenses."</p> <p>"Ultimately, new fossil fuels are a death project by our government," the psychology student is quoted as saying.</p> <p>"So yes there is glue on the frame of this painting but there is blood on the hands of our government."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/05 Juvenile crime hurting young victims
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/juvenile-crime-hurting-young-victims-across-major-us-cities
GIST	<p>A handful of teenage boys' tragic killings have made local and national headlines recently as a result of violent crime incidents in Philadelphia; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Chicago and other cities or metropolitan areas.</p> <p>Sean Toomey. James McGrath. Jasmine Brunson. Ethan Liming. Blu Bryant. Robert Yocum. Christian Beamon.</p> <p>While their names may look familiar, there are hundreds of teenagers — particularly teenage boys — who have been impacted by violent crime trends, often at the hands of other juveniles or young adults, in recent months.</p> <p>Victims</p> <p>McGrath and Liming were beaten to death. Toomey, Brunson, Bryant, Yocum and Beamon — the 18-year-old brother of Fox News contributor Gianno Caldwell — were fatally shot. Suspects have been named in less than half of their cases.</p> <p>"The defund the police movement has created chaos. People talk about studies saying there is no correlation between defunding the police and the increase in crime. But that's absolutely not true. I don't care about the studies you're referring to. It's a mentality," Caldwell told Fox News Digital about crime impacting juveniles in Chicago, where he grew up, and other major cities.</p> <p>He added that the "defund" movement has "created a mentality where the criminals" get away with burglary and other property or non-violent crimes and eventually turn to more violent offenses. Once they do commit violent crimes, such as taking another person's life, they "forfeit" their own "right to life," he said.</p> <p>"You lose your right to live because either, one, you're going to jail, or two, eventually you get murdered," Caldwell said when asked if he had a message for violent offenders. "That's when it automatically becomes a vicious cycle. My family's paying the price."</p> <p>Violent crime</p> <p>It is true that violent crime and juvenile crime have decreased in the United States since the 1990s and early 2000s.</p> <p>It is also true that violent crime has increased in certain major U.S. cities or metropolitan areas over the past two years since the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated hardships for Americans across the country and rhetoric regarding law enforcement shifted.</p> <p>Families living in those major U.S. cities are witnesses to — and victims of — those increases in crime, and they have concerns for youth growing up in those areas.</p> <p>"I was born and raised in this area," Sean Toomey's father, John Toomey, said of Philadelphia in an interview last week. "Nothing like this ever happened before. ... I'm not simply talking about my son's shooting. ... I just had my truck stolen two weeks ago. It was parked on the side of the street."</p> <p>He added that he is hearing "terrible news" about "carjackings" and other violent crime not only in Philadelphia but in other cities like Chicago.</p> <p>"The sad thing is, it's something government can't fix. It's for the family," he continued. "It starts with these kids. I would put a lot of money on the fact that none of them have fathers. They all come from a one-parent background. They're not brought up right."</p> <p>In Chicago and Philadelphia, homicides are down this year, even though they saw increases in homicide in 2020 and 2021.</p>

In Philadelphia, total homicide numbers are down about 5% year-over-year, but there has been a rise in violent crime driven by a nearly 61% uptick in armed robbery. Property crimes in the city are up 30% on average, with every category of property crime increasing since last year. Commercial burglary is up about 53%, theft from a person is up about 64%, theft from auto is up nearly 48% and auto theft is up 16%.

In Chicago, total homicides have decreased year-over-year from 336 in 2021 to 204 this year, other forms of violent crime, including robbery, aggravated battery, burglary, theft and motor vehicle theft have increased since the same time period last year. Total violent crime in has increased 34% so far this year.

Juvenile crime

Juvenile crime also increased in major cities. Carjackings, armed robberies, assaults and burglaries involving juveniles has risen in cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and others since about 2019, with carjackings being the most prevalent among juveniles.

Carjackings have [soared by 286% in New York City](#) from 2019 to 2021, while [Philadelphia saw the](#) second-highest increase, 238%, according to National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) president and CEO David Glawe. Chicago followed with the third-highest increase, 207%, from 2019 to 2021, then Washington, D.C. with a 200% increase and New Orleans with 159%, Glawe previously told Fox News Digital.

Chicago officials have cited data showing carjacking offenders are most often between the ages of 15 and 20.

In Washington, D.C., homicides are up 14% and robbery is up 29% so far this year. Instances of motor vehicle theft, theft from auto and "other" auto incidents are relatively unchanged since last year, when auto theft and theft from auto had increased since 2020. Juveniles have made up the [majority of carjacking suspects](#) over the last two years.

In Hinds County — home to Jackson, Mississippi — Sheriff Tyree Jones said in a May discussion that he has "been in law enforcement for nearly 23 years," and "within the last year or two, it has been the worst" he has "ever seen it regarding our youth," according to [WLBT](#).

Experts have previously told [Fox News Digital](#) that carjacking incidents can often lead to violent crime.

[Philadelphia Police Commissioner](#) Danielle Outlaw told Fox News Digital in a June interview the "pandemic exacerbated a lot of the social inequities that we saw around access to health care, access to housing, access just to food, when...the administration shut down the schools because of COVID."

"[W]e lost a lot of our warm touchpoints, specifically around young people, because we're seeing that our shooters have gotten younger, and our shooting victims have also gotten younger," she said.

[Video](#)

At least 104 shooting victims in Philadelphia so far this year are under the age of 18, according to the [Officer of the Controller](#).

Preventative measures

Maria Tcherni-Buzzeo, associate professor of criminal justice at the University of New Haven in Connecticut, pointed to the prevalence of firearms in major cities as part of the current juvenile crime issue, which she noted has decreased over the last three decades.

"There is this natural instinct to say, 'Oh, kids are out of control. What is happening?' ... But whatever is driving this trend in homicide — it's clearly different from the trends in other violent crime because every almost every other violent crime has been down," she said. "And so there must be something that is different about homicides specifically. And actually another category of crime that has been going up is

	<p>mass shootings. And so my guess is that it probably has something to do with guns, because why do we see other violent crimes not affected as much?"</p> <p>"It takes a village," including services and opportunities, as well as treatment and counseling, to prevent juveniles from committing crimes and keep them safe in their communities, Tcherni-Buzzeo continued. Renee Williams, executive director at the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC), said juvenile victims of crime need to receive adequate support after a violent encounter to ensure that they do not fall into a cycle of violence.</p> <p>"It is a learned behavior," she said. "It is not something that is natural for the juvenile."</p> <p>Williams added that it is "a pretty high statistic of juvenile offenders that have gone through children's services and then become offenders."</p> <p>While different services for victims of crime differ jurisdiction by jurisdiction, Williams suggested crime victims seek therapy, victim advocates that are often offered by prosecutors or law enforcement offices, and centers that offer help to those who have been subject to violent crime. Additionally, NCVC's free hotline connects crime victims with specialists trained to help victims "identify services" and compensation applications to ease the recovery process.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Chicago-area July 4 parade mass shooting
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/chicago-july-4-parade-shooting-92b50feb80c19afe7842b9caf08545cb
GIST	<p>HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) — A gunman on a rooftop opened fire on an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago on Monday, killing at least six people, wounding at least 30 and sending hundreds of marchers, parents with strollers and children on bicycles fleeing in terror, police said.</p> <p>Authorities said a man named as a person of interest in the shooting was taken into police custody Monday evening after an hourslong manhunt in and around Highland Park, an affluent community of about 30,000 on Chicago's north shore.</p> <p>The July 4 shooting was just the latest to shatter the rituals of American life. Schools, churches, grocery stores and now community parades have all become killing grounds in recent months. This time, the bloodshed came as the nation tried to find cause to celebrate its founding and the bonds that still hold it together.</p> <p>"It definitely hits a lot harder when it's not only your hometown but it's also right in front of you," resident Ron Tuazon said as he and a friend returned to the parade route Monday evening to retrieve chairs, blankets and a child's bike that he and his family abandoned when the shooting began.</p> <p>"It's commonplace now," Tuazon said of what he called yet another American atrocity. "We don't blink anymore. Until laws change, it's going to be more of the same."</p> <p>The shooting occurred at a spot on the parade route where many residents had staked out prime viewing points early in the day for the annual celebration. Dozens of fired bullets sent hundreds of parade-goers — some visibly bloodied — fleeing. They left a trail of abandoned items that showed everyday life suddenly, violently disrupted: A half-eaten bag of potato chips; a box of chocolate cookies spilled onto the grass; a child's Chicago Cubs cap.</p> <p>"There's no safe place," said Highland Park resident Barbara Harte, 73, who had stayed away from the parade fearing a mass shooting, but later ventured from her home.</p> <p>Highland Park Police Chief Lou Jogmen said a police officer pulled over Robert E. Crimo III about five miles north of the shooting scene, several hours after police released the man's photo and an image of his silver Honda Fit, and warned the public that he was likely armed and dangerous. Authorities initially said he was 22, but an FBI bulletin and Crimo's social media said he was 21.</p>

Police declined to immediately identify Crimo as a suspect but said identifying him as a person of interest, sharing his name and other information publicly was a serious step.

Lake County Major Crime Task Force spokesman Christopher Covelli said at a news conference “several of the deceased victims” died at the scene and one was taken to a hospital and died there. Police have not released details about the victims or wounded.

Lake County Coroner Jennifer Banek said the five people killed at the parade were adults, but didn’t have information on the sixth victim who was taken to a hospital and died there. One of those killed was a Mexican national, Roberto Velasco, Mexico’s director for North American affairs, said on Twitter Monday. He said two other Mexicans were wounded.

NorthShore University Health Center received 26 patients after the attack. All but one had gunshot wounds, said Dr. Brigham Temple, medical director of emergency preparedness. Their ages ranged from 8 to 85, and Temple estimated that four or five patients were children.

Temple said 19 of them were treated and discharged. Others were transferred to other hospitals, while two patients, in stable condition, remained at the Highland Park hospital.

“It is devastating that a celebration of America was ripped apart by our uniquely American plague,” Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said at a news conference.

“I’m furious because it does not have to be this way... while we celebrate the Fourth of July just once a year, mass shootings have become a weekly — yes, weekly — American tradition.”

The shooter opened fire around 10:15 a.m., when the parade was about three-quarters through, authorities said.

Highland Park Police Commander Chris O’Neill, the incident commander on scene, said the gunman apparently used a “high-powered rifle” to fire from a spot atop a commercial building where he was “very difficult to see.” He said the rifle was recovered at the scene. Police also found a ladder attached to the building.

“Very random, very intentional and a very sad day,” Covelli said.

President Joe Biden on Monday said he and first lady Jill Biden were “shocked by the senseless gun violence that has yet again brought grief to an American community on this Independence Day.”

Biden signed the widest-ranging gun violence bill passed by Congress in decades, a compromise that showed at once both progress on a long-intractable issue and the deep-seated partisan divide that persists.

As a word of an arrest spread, residents who had hunkered in homes began venturing outside, some walking toward where the shooting occurred. Several people stood and stared at the scene, with abandoned picnic blankets, hundreds of lawn chairs and backpacks still where they were when the shooting began.

Police believe there was only one shooter but warned that he should still be considered armed and dangerous. Several nearby cities canceled events including parades and fireworks, some of them noting that the Highland Park shooter was still at large. The Chicago White Sox also announced on Twitter that a planned post-game fireworks show is canceled due to the shooting.

More than 100 law enforcement officers were called to the parade scene or dispatched to find the suspected shooter.

More than a dozen police officers on Monday surrounded a home listed as an address for Crimo in Highland Park. Some officers held rifles as they fixed their eyes on the home. Police blockaded roads

leading to the home in a tree-lined neighborhood near a golf course, allowing only select law enforcement cars through a tight outer perimeter.

Crimo, who goes by the name Bobby, was an aspiring rapper with the stage name Awake the Rapper, posting on social media dozens videos and songs, some ominous and violent.

In one animated video since taken down by YouTube, Crimo raps about armies “walking in darkness” as a drawing appears of a man pointing a rifle, a body on the ground and another figure with hands up in the distance. A later frame shows a close-up of a chest with blood pouring out and another of police cars arriving as the shooter holds his hands up.

In another video, in which Crimo appears in a classroom wearing a black bicycle helmet, he says he is “like a sleepwalker... I know what I have to do,” then adds, “Everything has led up to this. Nothing can stop me, even myself.”

Crimo’s father, Bob, a longtime deli owner, ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Highland Park in 2019, calling himself “a person for the people.”

Highland Park is a close-knit community of about 30,000 people located on the shores of Lake Michigan just north of Chicago, with mansions and sprawling lakeside estates that have long drawn the rich and sometimes famous, including NBA legend Michael Jordan, who lived in the city for years when he played for the Chicago Bulls. John Hughes filmed parts of several movies in the city, including “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” “Sixteen Candles” and “Weird Science.”

Ominous signs of a joyous event suddenly turned to horror filled both sides of Central Avenue where the shooting occurred. Dozens of baby strollers — some bearing American flags, abandoned children’s bikes and a helmet bedecked with images of Cinderella were left behind. Blankets, lawn chairs, coffees and water bottles were knocked over as people fled.

Gina Troiani and her son were lined up with his daycare class ready to walk onto the parade route when she heard a loud sound that she believed was fireworks — until she heard people yell about a shooter. In a video that Troiani shot on her phone, some of the kids are visibly startled at the loud noise, and they scramble to the side of the road as a siren wails nearby.

“We just start running in the opposite direction,” she told The Associated Press.

Her 5-year-old son was riding his bike decorated with red and blue curled ribbons. He and other children in the group held small American flags. The city said on its website that the festivities were to include a children’s bike and pet parade.

Troiani said she pushed her son’s bike, running through the neighborhood to get back to their car.

“It was just sort of chaos,” she said. “There were people that got separated from their families, looking for them. Others just dropped their wagons, grabbed their kids and started running.”

Debbie Glickman, a Highland Park resident, said she was on a parade float with coworkers and the group was preparing to turn onto the main route when she saw people running from the area.

“People started saying: ‘There’s a shooter, there’s a shooter, there’s a shooter,’” Glickman told the AP. “So we just ran. We just ran. It’s like mass chaos down there.”

She didn’t hear any noises or see anyone who appeared to be injured.

“I’m so freaked out,” she said. “It’s just so sad.”

HEADLINE	07/04 Philadelphia fireworks show: 2 cops shot
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/two-philadelphia-police-officers-shot-during-fourth-of-july-fireworks?ref=home
GIST	Two police officers were shot during the fireworks display at Philadelphia's Fourth of July festivities on Monday. The two officers are in stable condition at Jefferson Hospital. The shooting sent crowds enjoying the evening's events into a panic, with hundreds fleeing the scene in what some told the <i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> resembled a "stampede." So far, no suspect has been taken into custody, but the Philadelphia Police Department has asked loved ones separated in the panic to reunite at a close-by library. It was the first time that Philadelphia had held the Independence Day events since the beginning of the pandemic. Fireworks-gazer Tracy Fairey told the <i>Inquirer</i> that she and her 6-year-old daughter hid behind a truck. "Some people were banging on the doors but they wouldn't let them in," she said.
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HEADLINE	07/04 Seattle downtown guns, drugs busts
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-seize-drugs-several-guns-3-teens-7-adults-over-three-day-period/6YD6I32B2VEGTC7YJG3EGPD5YE/
GIST	<p>Over a three-day period last week, Seattle police arrested three teenagers for firearms violations in the Downtown core and seven adults with drugs in the same area, the Seattle Police Department announced Monday.</p> <p>On Thursday, June 30, around 12:30 p.m., an officer watched someone conduct several drug deals, police said.</p> <p>Officers arrested the person and found out he was 15 years old.</p> <p>When police searched the teen, they found a gun with the serial number scratched off, along with nearly 6 grams of methamphetamine, 500 grams of cannabis, and 82 fentanyl pills.</p> <p>The teen was booked into the King County Children and Family Justice Center for illegal possession of a firearm and illegal possession of narcotics.</p> <p>Three days later, on July 2, officers conducted a narcotics operation in the area of 3rd Avenue and Pike Street.</p> <p>While in the area, officers watched someone pass a gun to another person. When it was safe, officers arrested both and learned they were 16 and 14 years old.</p> <p>In addition to the gun, the 14-year-old had 10 "pharmaceutical opioid pills," police said. The 16-year-old had several fentanyl pills.</p> <p>Both were booked into the King County Children and Family Justice Center for illegal possession of a firearm and illegal possession of narcotics.</p> <p>In addition to those two teens, officers arrested seven adults and seized around 64 grams of fentanyl, 20 grams of crack cocaine, 21 grams of heroin, and more than \$1,100 in cash.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Chicago bloody weekend: 54 shot, 7 dead
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/chicagos-bloody-holiday-weekend-continues-54-people-shot-7-dead-friday-evening
GIST	Violence in Chicago continues to escalate over the long July 4th weekend, with 54 people shot, 7 of them fatally.

[The weekend kicked off](#) with 22 people shot, four fatally, within the span of 20 hours on Friday. Violent encounters with police also popped up throughout the weekend, with Chicago Police Superintendent David Brown begging parents to take responsibility over their children.

"There's no reason why everyone can't enjoy the holiday and every event safely. Parents, please, please know where your children are," he said. "Don't leave them to government to be the parents of your kids. We need you, parents, please, to help us make sure your young people are safe."

A crowd of protesters in Chicago's Loop [attacked police cars](#) with fireworks and blunt objects after authorities responded to reports of cars doing donuts in an intersection.

Victims of the fatal shootings range from a 24-year-old woman who was killed in a crossfire between two gunmen to a 35-year-old man killed in an apparently random attack while sitting in a car.

Another 26-year-old man was killed in a drive-by shooting while riding his bike just before 6 p.m. on Friday.

The most recent reported fatality was a man believed to be 25-25 years old, according to ABC-7. He was killed while walking on the street after vehicle pulled up next to him and a gunman got out.

Several of the victims of non-fatal shootings may die from their injuries in the coming days, including a 90-year-old man who remains in critical condition at Mount Sinai Hospital with a gunshot wound to the abdomen.

The youngest victims of [Chicago's shootings](#) was a 10-year-old boy, who was wounded in his bedroom after at least one gunman opened fire on his home. The boy is in the hospital and in good condition, according to ABC.

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HEADLINE	07/04 Virginia law stops early inmate release
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/virginia-law-stops-early-inmate-releases-angering-families-86178601
GIST	<p>RICHMOND, Va. -- Christopher Ford was a baby when his father was sentenced to 28 years in prison for participating in a murder-for-hire scheme that led to the killings of two people at a car dealership.</p> <p>After serving 25 years, prison officials told Robert Glenn Ford he would be released in July under a 2020 Virginia law that allowed inmates to shave more time off their sentences for good behavior, his son said.</p> <p>But just before he was expecting to go home, Virginia lawmakers approved a budget amendment from Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin that excluded Ford and thousands of other inmates with violent offenses from receiving the expanded earned sentence credits, meaning they would have to serve more time.</p> <p>"Using this back-door method days before they were supposed to get out was, to me, hugely wrong," Christopher Ford said in an interview.</p> <p>As lawmakers debated the amendment, they discussed the approximately 560 inmates who, like Robert Ford, were set to be released in the first 60 days of the program. But the impact is far larger. A spokesman for the Department of Corrections confirmed that about 8,000 inmates will now be ineligible for the expanded credits.</p> <p>Relatives and other advocates for the affected inmates said the reversal cruelly upended reunion and homecoming plans, devastating families and the inmates themselves.</p> <p>Republicans, who were joined by a few Senate Democrats in approving the amendment, made the case that offenders who were convicted of violent crimes shouldn't get a shot at reducing their time behind bars.</p>

The law, passed in 2020 when Democrats were in full control of state government, created a tiered system that allowed inmates with good behavior and participation in rehabilitation programs to earn expanded credits for up to 15 days per month to be taken off their sentences for nonviolent offenses. Before the law was approved, inmates could earn up to 4.5 days per month. Very few inmates qualify for parole in Virginia.

The 2020 law had a delayed effective date of July 1, 2022, so prison officials would have time to calculate new release dates. And the change in credits applied retroactively, meaning the Department of Corrections was preparing for an initial surge of releases when it took effect.

Under the 2020 law, violent offenses were not eligible for the expanded credit. But if inmates had a combined sentence with both a violent conviction and a lower-tier one, they could potentially shave some time off the sentence they were given for the nonviolent offense.

Multiple attempts to repeal the law failed, but the last-minute budget amendment from Youngkin was approved by the General Assembly on June 17. He signed the budget bill days later.

During a debate in the state Senate over the amendment, Republicans suggested the law went further than initially intended in allowing inmates with violent convictions to reduce any portion of their sentence, even for the separate, lesser convictions.

"Because of the way this was drafted, this is a loophole we should close," said Republican Sen. Mark Obenshain. He read from a list of the most serious offenses committed by the inmates among the first batch of early releases, and insisted that some of those people would go on to offend again.

"We're going to hear about it when one of these 41 rapists commits another rape," he said.

Democratic Sen. Joe Morrissey said everyone knew how the changes would work when the law was passed and accused Republicans of playing politics with the issue.

"I know what's coming in November and October, that Democrats let all these people out of prison. It's a great soundbite and a great commercial, but that's not what we're doing," he said.

Youngkin also characterized the amendment as a simple fix when a group of women with affected relatives confronted him last week at a campaign-style event in Woodbridge, where he was touting the recently signed budget. His aides whisked him away after the women began to shout questions.

"They dangled this hope in their faces and then they snatched it up from under their feet 10 days before they were supposed to be released. That's ridiculous," said Chari Baker, whose husband was among those affected.

Baker, who said she runs a prison reform advocacy group, said the change upended plans ranging from weddings to employment opportunities. In one instance, a father close to death was hoping to see his son before he died, she said.

Christopher Ford said his father, now 62, became a Jehovah's Witness in 2006 and volunteers as a group leader in religious studies in prison. He's also taken agriculture courses and has held a job in the prison kitchen for years.

"I understand the fears some people have (about releasing him from prison), but there are people who have changed during their time. My father is not the same person he was in 1997 when he committed these crimes," he said.

Christopher Ford said because his father's release has been put off until February, his family has delayed homecoming celebrations, like a planned camping trip and trip to a New York Giants game.

	<p>Paulettra James will be waiting even longer. She expected her husband's release date to be moved up by up to 10 years, thanks to the expanded credits. Jerry James is serving a 38-year term for a series of bank robberies and has worked hard to turn his life around, his wife said.</p> <p>"To get this news was beyond devastating. It was heartbreaking," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Police: no indication mall attack 'terrorism'
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/four-critically-wounded-three-killed-danish-mall-shooting-sunday-police-says-2022-07-04/
GIST	<p>COPENHAGEN, July 4 (Reuters) - A shooting in a Copenhagen shopping mall which left three people dead and several wounded could not be viewed as an "act of terror" based on current evidence, Danish police said on Monday.</p> <p>A 22-year-old Danish male has been arrested and charged with manslaughter. He will face questioning in front of a judge later on Monday.</p> <p>Chief Police Inspector Soren Thomassen told reporters there was no indication the suspect had acted together with others.</p> <p>"There has been some sort of deliberation and preparation (by the suspect) up to this terrible event," Thomassen told a news conference without providing details on the perpetrator's possible motives.</p> <p>"Our current assessment is that these are random victims."</p> <p>The incident rocked Denmark at the end of a week in which it hosted the first three stages of the Tour de France cycle race and hundreds of thousands of cheering Danes took to the streets across the country.</p> <p>The shooter killed two 17-year-olds, a man and a woman, and a 47-year-old Russian citizen living in Denmark.</p> <p>Four other people were also wounded by gunshot. Three of them were now stable and one remained in critical condition, a health official from Danish emergency medical services said.</p> <p>The wounded included two Swedish citizens, a 50-year-old man and a 16-year-old woman.</p> <p>A number of people were slightly injured when fleeing the scene, but not by gunshots.</p> <p>The attack took place when many young people had flocked to the mall ahead of a concert due to be held by British singer Harry Styles in Copenhagen on Sunday evening not far from the shopping centre. The concert was cancelled. read more</p> <p>"I'm heartbroken along with the people of Copenhagen. I adore this city. The people are so warm and full of love. I'm devastated for the victims, their families, and everyone hurting," Styles wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>"I'm sorry we couldn't be together. Please look after each other."</p> <p>The suspect, who police said was known to psychiatrists in Denmark, was in possession of a rifle, ammunition and a knife when he was arrested.</p> <p>Danish gun laws are strict and all weapons, with the exception of some hunting rifles, require a licence issued by the police. The type of weapons used by the suspect had been legal, police said, but the shooter did not have a licence to use them.</p>

	Denmark's largest cinema operator Nordisk Film, which has a venue at the Field's shopping centre, said it had decided to close its theaters across the country on Monday due to the shooting.
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HEADLINE	07/04 US: rewards for tips on Mideast smugglers
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/religion-iran-dubai-united-arab-emirates-middle-east-7acc2c21c722613b1768f685230d5902
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. Navy’s Mideast-based 5th Fleet is starting to offer rewards for information that could help sailors intercept weapons, drugs and other illicit shipments across the region amid tensions over Iran’s nuclear program and Tehran’s arming of Yemen’s Houthi rebels.</p> <p>While avoiding directly mentioning Iran, the 5th Fleet’s decision to offer cash and other goods for actionable intelligence in the Persian Gulf and other strategic waterways may increase pressure on the flow of weapons to the Houthis as a shaky cease-fire still holds in Yemen.</p> <p>Already, the Houthis have threatened a new allied task force organized by the 5th Fleet in the Red Sea, though there’s been no attack by the Iranian-backed forces on the Navy in the time since.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the 5th Fleet says it and its partners seized \$500 million in drugs alone in 2021 — more than the four prior years combined. The 5th Fleet also intercepted 9,000 weapons in the same period, three times the number seized in 2020.</p> <p>“Any destabilizing activity has our attention,” Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, a 5th Fleet spokesman, told The Associated Press. “Definitely we have seen in the last year skyrocketing success in seizing both illegal narcotics and illicit weapons. This represents another step in our effort to enhance regional maritime security.”</p> <p>The 5th Fleet’s new initiative launches on Tuesday through the Department of Defense Rewards Program, which saw troops offer cash and goods for tips on the battlefields in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere after al-Qaida launched the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Since ground fighting has largely halted across the region, the 5th Fleet decided to try to use the program as it patrols the waterways of the Middle East.</p> <p>Hawkins said operators fluent in Arabic, English and Farsi would man a hotline, while the Navy also would take tips additionally online, in Dari and Pashto. Payouts can be as high as \$100,000 or the equivalent in vehicles, boats or food for tips that also include information on planned attacks targeting Americans, Hawkins said.</p> <p>It’s unclear if the 5th Fleet’s uptick in seizures represents a return to shipping after the coronavirus pandemic or an increase overall in the number of illicit shipments in the region. Traffickers typically use stateless dhows, traditional wooden sailing craft common in the Mideast, to transport drugs and weapons.</p> <p>One destination for weapons appears to be Yemen. The Houthis seized Yemen’s capital, Sanaa, in September 2014 and forced the internationally recognized government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition armed with U.S. weaponry and intelligence entered the war on the side of Yemen’s exiled government in March 2015. Years of inconclusive fighting has pushed the Arab world’s poorest nation to the brink of famine. A truce that began around the holy Muslim month of Ramadan appears for now to still be holding.</p> <p>Despite a United Nations Security Council arms embargo on Yemen, Iran long has been transferring rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, missiles and other weaponry to the Houthis. Though Iran denies arming the Houthis, independent experts, Western nations and U.N. experts have traced components back to Iran.</p> <p>Asked about whether new seizures could increase tensions with Iran, Hawkins listed the weapons and drugs the Navy hoped to intercept under the program.</p>

	<p>“That’s what we’re after,” the commander said. “That’s not in the interest of regional stability and security.”</p> <p>Iran’s mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment. The U.S. Navy and Iran continue to have tense encounters in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes.</p> <p>The rewards program marks the latest initiative under 5th Fleet Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, who also launched a drone task force last year amid tensions with Iran.</p> <p>Cooper’s other effort, the Red Sea task force, has drawn criticism from the Houthis in the past. The rebel group, which has repeatedly denied being armed by Iran, did not respond to a request for comment on the new Navy program.</p> <p>However, Ali al-Qahom, a Houthi official, tweeted last week that the rebels are monitoring increased U.S. activity in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf waters.</p> <p>“Because of this, defense and confrontation options are open,” he said. “They and their diabolical projects have no place” in the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Denmark police: arrest in mall shooting
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/03/denmark-police-make-arrest-several-people-shot-copenhagen-mall/1541656875465/
GIST	<p>July 3 (UPI) -- Danish police have arrested a 22-year-old man after three people were shot dead and several others were injured inside a mall near Copenhagen on Sunday, officials said.</p> <p>The Copenhagen Police Department identified the deceased victims in a statement a young man, a young woman and a man in his forties.</p> <p>"The police are working to identify them and inform their relatives," it said.</p> <p>Neither the number of people injured nor the circumstances that led up to the shooting were immediately known though authorities said investigators were working on the premise that the gunman, identified as a Danish national, acted alone.</p> <p>"We are in the process of a massive and very extensive investigation, which will continue throughout the night and in the coming days," Chief Police Inspector Soren Thomassen said.</p> <p>Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen described the shooting as "a cruel attack" while calling on all Danes to "stand together and support each other in this difficult time."</p> <p>"We have all been brutally torn out of the bright summer we had just begun. It is incomprehensible. Heartbreaking. Pointless," she said in a statement. "Our beautiful and usually so safe capital was changed in a split second."</p> <p>Authorities said officers first received reports of shots fired at around 5:37 p.m. local time inside Field's, which is Denmark's largest shopping center and is located about nine minutes from Copenhagen by subway "Copenhagen Police quickly arrived on the site where a 22-year-old male suspect was arrested," police officials said.</p> <p>Earlier in the day, the Copenhagen Police Department tweeted that "shots have been fired and several people have been hit" while warning locals to stay away from the area.</p>

"We do not yet know for sure how many are injured or dead, but it is very serious," Copenhagen Mayor Sophie Anderson had said [in a statement](#) in the aftermath of the shooting, adding that officials were in close communication with police.

Lars Gaardhøj, the chairman of the capital region's governing council, said [in a statement](#) that area hospitals "are on standby" to receive patients after the "serious situation" at the Fields shopping center.

The Flemish Peace Institute, a think tank hosted by the Flemish Parliament in Belgium, [has noted](#) that Denmark has been ranked the second-most peaceful nation in the world and has very low violent crime rates.

"Denmark has one of the strictest -- possibly the strictest -- gun ownership laws in Europe," the Flemish Peace Institute said. "The only type of weapon that civilians may own without a license are air rifles of a caliber of 4.5 mm or less."

All other firearms require a license and self-defense is not a legitimate reason for acquiring a weapon, according to the think tank.

"The only two reasons for being granted a firearms license are for sports shooting and hunting purposes," according to the think tank. "To gain an individual license, sports shooters are required to have been active members of a sports shooting club for at least two years."

Hunters must pass an advanced hunting exam and are allowed to use semi-automatic rifles but cannot carry more than two magazine cartridges at a time.

There are currently only about 170,000 active hunting licenses in Denmark, which has a population of about 5.8 million.

Queen Margrethe in [a joint statement](#) with her son Crown Prince Frederik and his wife, Crown Princess Mary, said that while the full extent of the incident was not yet known "it is already clear that more people have lost their lives and that even more have been injured."

"Our thoughts and deepest sympathy are with the victims, their relatives and all those affected by the tragedy," they said. "The situation calls for united and care, and we would like to thank the police, the emergency services and the health authorities for their quick and effective efforts during these hours."

British pop singer [Harry Styles](#), who was to perform at the Royal Arena on Sunday night as part of his European tour, announced the show was canceled due to the shooting.

"I'm heartbroken along with the people of Copenhagen. I adore this city. The people are so warm and full of love," he said in [a statement](#). "I'm devastated for the victims, their families and everyone hurting. I'm sorry we couldn't be together."

The shooting comes a little more than a week after a 42-year-old Norwegian citizen of Iranian descent killed two people and injured more than 20 others in [a shooting at a LGBTQ nightclub](#) in neighboring Norway.

Authorities arrested the suspected gunman and said they believed he was acting alone.

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HEADLINE	07/03 Tacoma drive-by shooting: 1 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263148968.html
GIST	A reported drive-by shooting in Tacoma left one man with serious injuries, and prompted Tacoma police to shut down the intersection of South 47th Street and South Tacoma Way Sunday evening.

	<p>Police spokesperson Wendy Haddow said the initial dispatch call came at 4:24 p.m. Two cars were driving on South Tacoma Way, and an unidentified person fired at someone in the other vehicle. The victim, an adult male, was transported to a local hospital with “serious injuries,” Haddow said.</p> <p>The incident comes a week after multiple shootings in the same area injured eight people following a dance party event at a private venue, and a separate fatal shooting on the city’s East side that killed one man and injured four other people.</p> <p>Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards issued a statement last week following the earlier incidents, saying, “This is unacceptable, and it is a good reminder that we must continue our efforts to prioritize violent crime reduction.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/04 Tacoma neighborhood dispute: 4 shot
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263152913.html
GIST	<p>Gunfire and mayhem continue to plague Tacoma; four people were shot Sunday night in what police described as “a neighborhood dispute” in the 3300 block of South Asotin Street on the city’s East side, according to a brief statement posted online.</p> <p>Police responded to dispatch calls at 9:08 p.m., said police spokesperson Wendy Haddow. Four people, all adults, were shot. Their injuries are not life-threatening, Haddow said.</p> <p>The still-evolving incident led to a K9 track. Police were still investigating shortly before midnight. No other information was immediately available.</p> <p>The East side shooting followed an earlier drive-by shooting Sunday on South Tacoma Way, which is also under active investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Akron police kill man fleeing traffic stop
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/03/akron-police-jayland-walker-video/
GIST	<p>AKRON, Ohio — Police on Sunday released body-camera footage showing officers firing dozens of rounds at a Black man who left his car while fleeing a traffic stop last week.</p> <p>Akron Police Chief Stephen Mylett said he did not know the exact number of rounds fired at Jayland Walker. But, Mylett added, the medical examiner’s report indicates more than 60 wounds to the body of the 25-year-old, whose killing has sparked outrage and demands for accountability.</p> <p>The police chief described the footage, which was blurred to obscure Walker, as “difficult to watch” and “shocking.” He said he would reserve judgment until hearing from the officers involved. Evidence indicates that Walker fired a gun from inside his vehicle during the car chase, Mylett said.</p> <p>“When an officer makes the most critical decision in his or her life as a police officer, when they fire an arm at another human being, they have to be ready to explain why they did what they did — they need to be able to articulate what specific threats they were facing,” he said. “And that goes for every round that goes down the barrel of their gun. And they need to be held to account.”</p> <p>Eight officers involved in the shooting have been placed on paid leave pending the outcome of a probe by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation.</p> <p>Police tried to stop Walker’s Buick at about 12:30 a.m. Monday for investigation of an unspecified traffic violation and chased him when he did not pull over, the Akron Police Department said. Shortly after police said a gunshot was heard coming from his vehicle, Walker jumped out of the car and ran into a parking lot, with officers following.</p>

“Actions by the suspect caused the officers to perceive he posed a deadly threat to them,” the police department said in a news release. “In response to this threat, officers discharged their firearms, striking the suspect.”

Walker was pronounced dead in the parking lot. Among the images police displayed Sunday were those of a gun that they said they found on the passenger seat of his car.

An attorney for his family, Bobby DiCello, told The Washington Post this weekend that eight officers fired more than 90 rounds at Walker, with more than 60 striking his body.

“It was absolutely excessive,” DiCello said at a news conference after the video’s release. “The law requires you to use force that is reasonable.”

Akron residents have joined Walker’s family in demanding accountability for his death, the third police shooting in the northeastern Ohio city since December. Amid the uproar, Mayor Daniel Horrigan (D) announced the cancellation of the Rib, White & Blue Festival planned for the July Fourth weekend, saying, “I feel strongly that this is not the time for a city-led celebration.”

Instead of celebrating the holiday on Sunday afternoon, people were searching for shade at the Harold K. Stubbs Justice Center so they could get a good look at the body-camera footage on their phones.

Sandra Dees, 48, of Akron joined a group of armed people, one of whom identified himself as a Black Panther, under a tree. She says her son Jordan McCormick was killed in a Texas police shooting in May.

Dees and others grumbled about how hard it was to see what was going on in the video and the duration of the police chase. Then, sounds like those of weak firecrackers echoed on the phones.

The small crowd erupted into shouts and screams.

“Oh my God!” Dees said, bursting into tears.

“They murdered him — that’s murder all day long.” Her friend Marquita Carter draped her arm around Dees and walked with her while she sobbed.

LaDamien Malone, 35, there with his 4-year-old daughter, paced and wept as he shouted “Justice for Jayland!”

“I’m over here in tears — that is not right!

“When he hit the ground, they kept firing rounds. That’s completely unjustified. That’s what made me cry — that right there.

“The police — they should be locking them up right now,” Malone said, “before they do somebody else like that.”

Before playing the video on Sunday, city officials offered condolences to Walker’s family members, who watched the video before its release. Officials thanked the Walkers for their repeated requests that the protests remain peaceful.

“If Jayland reflects the character of this family — which I continually heard that he did — you raised a good son,” Mylett said.

The video lasted about seven minutes. Much of it showed an officer’s hands on his steering wheel as he and other officers sped after Walker’s vehicle, sirens blaring.

Seconds into the pursuit, a sound that the police department described as “consistent with a gunshot” could be heard. Images from overhead captured a flash of light at the door of the vehicle as Walker drove on an expressway.

“Shots fired,” an officer said over police radio. “That vehicle just had a shot come out of its door.”

Walker exited the expressway, jumped out of the car and ran. Officers chased after him; the police department said officers deployed their stun guns, though that was not evident in the video.

In the last moments of the footage, yelling officers unloaded a hail of bullets on Walker, who Mylett said had suddenly turned toward them.

DiCello said Walker’s behavior, including wearing a ski mask, was “strange, no doubt. But I want to add, that behavior is not lethal behavior.”

In the unblurred footage, he said, Walker’s body twitched with every shot fired.

“He wasn’t a criminal,” DiCello said. “He obviously was in pain. He didn’t deserve to die.”

In a joint statement before Sunday’s news conference, the mayor and the police chief described the shooting as “a dark day for our city, for the families of those involved, as well as for the officers.” They added that “the loss of any life is absolutely devastating to our entire community.”

More than 1,040 people have been fatally shot by police in the past year nationwide, according to Washington Post data. Half those people were White, but Black Americans are shot at a disproportionate rate. They account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population but are killed by police at more than twice the rate of White people.

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HEADLINE	07/02 Kentucky sheriff: gunman kills 3 deputies
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/02/three-police-die-in-kentucky-shooting-while-serving-domestic-violence-warrant
GIST	<p>Three law enforcement officers were killed and five others wounded in eastern Kentucky when a man with a rifle opened fire on police attempting to serve a warrant, authorities said.</p> <p>An emergency management official was also injured and a police dog was killed during the confrontation at a home in Allen, a small town in the hills of Appalachia.</p> <p>Police took 49-year-old Lance Storz into custody late Thursday night after an hours-long standoff.</p> <p>The responding officers encountered “pure hell” when they arrived on the scene, the sheriff of Floyd county, John Hunt, told reporters Friday afternoon.</p> <p>“They had no chance,” said Hunt, whose jurisdiction includes Allen.</p> <p>Hunt said four deputies initially responded, and they called for backup when they were shot at. Storz surrendered after negotiations that included his family members, the sheriff said.</p> <p>Hunt had told local media the deputies were serving a court-issued warrant Thursday evening related to a domestic violence situation.</p> <p>One of Hunt’s deputies, William Petry, and Prestonsburg, Kentucky, police captain Ralph Frasure were killed in the shooting.</p>

	<p>Frasure worked for 39 years in law enforcement in Floyd county. Another Prestonsburg officer, Jacob Chaffins, died after being taken to a hospital, the police department said in a social media post Friday night.</p> <p>Storz was arraigned Friday morning by a judge in nearby Pike county. He pleaded not guilty to murdering police officers, among other charges, and was jailed on a \$10m bond.</p> <p>“This is a tough morning for our commonwealth,” the governor of Kentucky, Andy Beshear, said in a social media post Friday. “Floyd county and our brave first responders suffered a tragic loss last night.</p> <p>“I want to ask all of Kentucky to join me in praying for this community.”</p> <p>The state’s attorney general, Daniel Cameron, posted on social media that he was heartbroken over news of the officers’ deaths.</p> <p>“Our law enforcement exhibited unimaginable heroism and sacrifice last night in the face of evil,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 DOJ braces for summer of violent crime
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/03/us/politics/gun-violence-crime-summer.html
GIST	<p>PHILADELPHIA — The motorcade carrying Lisa O. Monaco, the No. 2 law enforcement official in the United States, maneuvered between potholes, and people, on Kensington Avenue when her driver braked for a man wandering into traffic with a hypodermic needle dangling from his arm.</p> <p>It was late June, and Ms. Monaco was in the city to address a particularly savage surge in drug abuse and violent crime here, shuttling to meetings with federal prosecutors, state and local police officials, and community members aimed at combating an annual spike in summer violence ushered in by the Fourth of July weekend.</p> <p>“People are living in an environment they shouldn’t have to endure,” she said a few days later, recalling the drive from downtown to meet with beat cops in Northeast Philadelphia. “You actually have to step over needles to take your kid to the bus stop.”</p> <p>The encounter was an unsettling reminder of the daunting challenges the Justice Department faces in the coming months.</p> <p>If Washington is focused on the criminal investigation into the efforts to keep President Donald J. Trump in office after his 2020 election loss, the department’s top leaders are equally concerned with the stubborn, postpandemic rise in violent crime, and a growing sense that lawlessness is overtaking daily life in many big cities. Republicans have highlighted the issue, along with inflation, before the 2022 midterm elections, but Democrats, like Mayor Eric Adams of New York, are also embracing a law-and-order approach as their constituents demand action.</p> <p>The timing of Ms. Monaco’s trip, with the heat setting in over the city, was noteworthy. The onset of warm weather typically signals an onslaught of violence in many parts of the country, with holidays like Memorial Day and the Fourth of July proving deadly in recent years.</p> <p>Last year, at least 233 people were killed and 618 others were injured in about 500 shootings over the Fourth of July weekend, according to the Gun Violence Archive, an academic consortium that compiles law enforcement data. That was an improvement from 2020, when 314 people were killed and 751 more were injured.</p> <p>Mass shootings like those in Buffalo and Uvalde, Texas, pop up with little public warning. But the seasonal rise in violence in cities is more predictable, and local departments spend months girding for the surge, experimenting with different approaches to limit the carnage.</p>

In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot is deploying additional patrols on the city's West and South Sides. In Milwaukee, police officials are using new acoustic technology to pinpoint gunshots to identify six areas to concentrate on over the holiday weekend. The police in Philadelphia — the site of a recent 70-bullet shootout that one resident [likened to a scene from the Wild West](#) — are working on similar plans.

Yet the federal government, for all its vast investigative powers, plays a supporting role when it comes to fighting street crime. The Justice Department prosecutes major drug and weapons trafficking cases, provides technical support on gun tracing and the analysis of other evidence, and distributes billions in grants to supplement the budgets of local departments that are mainly paid for by area taxpayers.

Over the past year, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland has announced a series of steps intended to bolster efforts to counter rising crime rates, encouraged by a White House anxious about the dire political implications of the perception that they are letting the situation spiral out of control.

They include the creation of [five “strike forces”](#) that work with local law enforcement to disrupt firearms trafficking; a Drug Enforcement Administration initiative to combat drug-related violent crime and deal with overdose deaths in [34 cities](#), including Philadelphia, Chicago, Memphis and Detroit; a \$139 million initiative to hire 1,000 officers at understaffed local departments; and a rule that effectively bans the production and sale of homemade “[ghost guns](#),” which are fueling gun violence on the West Coast.

In December, Congress [provided \\$1.6 billion](#) in additional funding for departments and community groups to address violent crime and community justice. The associate attorney general, Vanita Gupta, who has tried to balance support of local law enforcement with the administration's social justice agenda, oversees some of those initiatives.

There has also been an uptick in prosecutions. Over the past few weeks, the department has brought a series of major gun cases, including an indictment against an illegal weapons dealer in Texas who sold 75 guns that were subsequently connected to homicides, drug deals and other crimes.

But the biggest recent boost, from the department's perspective, might be among the least flashy: the confirmations of U.S. attorneys whose nominations had previously been blocked by Republicans in the Senate, providing frontline federal prosecutors with more stability in aggressively pursuing cases. One of them is Jacqueline C. Romero, the new head of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, which includes Philadelphia, who took over the office shortly before Ms. Monaco's visit.

Ms. Monaco was also there to hear from the police directly. During a short visit to a mini-precinct in the Kensington area, several officers just out of the academy told her that, despite the challenges, their presence seemed to make a major difference even in hard-hit neighborhoods.

On Wednesday, after returning to Washington, Ms. Monaco began a meeting of all 93 U.S. attorneys — including 16 new ones in attendance for orientation — by stressing the need to coordinate with local law enforcement officials on the anticipated crime wave, according to a participant on the call.

Yet if her trip to Philadelphia proved anything, it is that the department's influence, while significant, is limited.

Moments before Ms. Monaco and Ms. Romero convened a law enforcement round table that included the police commissioner, Danielle Outlaw, at the U.S. attorney's office next to Independence Hall, the Supreme Court [loosened restrictions](#) on carrying firearms in public.

Later, Ms. Monaco met with parents whose children had been killed by guns. One by one, they shared heart-wrenching stories, and one by one, they asked her to take actions that were far beyond her power to address — like instituting stringent national gun control measures, including a ban on semiautomatic weapons rejected by Congress.

	<p>“I’m begging you people in Washington to do something,” pleaded one father who had lost two sons and a brother to gun violence, according to a person who attended the closed-door session.</p> <p>Another attendee, Cherie Q. Ryans, 72, a retired schoolteacher whose 18-year-old son was killed in 1990, said she was pleased to see Ms. Monaco and Ms. Outlaw and did not doubt their commitment to helping. But Ms. Ryans, an anti-violence activist, has seen well-intentioned officials fail in the past.</p> <p>“The chief and the lady from Washington might be very good, but we are in an environment where it doesn’t matter what experience they have, or what they plan to have,” she said in an interview.</p> <p>“Summer is coming,” she said. “I’m feeling that thing, that anxiety, about the summer. I’m afraid for myself, but now I’m mostly afraid for my grandchildren.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/03 Scam: 76 fake charities used same mailbox
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/03/us/politics/irs-fake-charities.html
GIST	<p>The “American Cancer Society of Michigan,” state authorities say, was a fake charity. And not even a good fake.</p> <p>It was not in Michigan, for one thing. When the group applied to the Internal Revenue Service to become a tax-exempt nonprofit in 2020, it listed its address as a rented mailbox on Staten Island. It was not the American Cancer Society, either: In fact, the real American Cancer Society had already warned the I.R.S. that the leader of the sound-alike group, Ian Hosang, was running a fraud.</p> <p>The I.R.S. approved the group anyway. Soon after, it also approved another operation run by Mr. Hosang: “the United Way of Ohio,” which was also registered to the Staten Island address.</p> <p>Mr. Hosang, 63, is now accused by prosecutors in New York of operating a long-running charity fraud that has astounded nonprofit regulators and watchdogs — and raised concerns about the I.R.S.’s ability to serve as gatekeeper for the American charity system.</p> <p>Not because the alleged scheme was so good.</p> <p>Because it was terrible. And it worked.</p> <p>Mr. Hosang — a convicted stock-market fraudster once accused of dangling a man out of a building — got the I.R.S. to approve 76 nonprofits, often despite glaring red flags of potential fraud. His operations stole the names of better-known charities. They claimed to be located where they obviously were not.</p> <p>But the I.R.S. kept saying yes. And in doing so, the agency has attracted scrutiny of its new fast-track system for approving charities — an innovation implemented to deal with backlogs and budget cuts that now denies only one application in 2,400, according to agency statistics.</p> <p>“Nobody’s watching the store,” said Nina E. Olson, who was the I.R.S.’s in-house national taxpayer advocate from 2001 to 2019 and warned repeatedly about the decreased level of vetting. “They’re the gatekeeper to this whole universe of charitable subsidies. And if the I.R.S. is not doing its job as a gatekeeper, then you’ve got real problems.”</p> <p>The agency declined to answer questions about Mr. Hosang’s case, citing taxpayer privacy laws. It also declined to make officials available for in-person interviews, but it released a written statement saying that the fast-track approval system “continues to reduce taxpayer burden and increase cost effectiveness of I.R.S. operations.”</p> <p>Mr. Hosang was indicted in Brooklyn in May on charges of grand larceny, identity theft and conducting a scheme to defraud. He has pleaded not guilty. The Brooklyn district attorney said he stole about \$152,000 in donations that flowed through 23 of his nonprofits. Mr. Hosang did not need to do much to promote the</p>

groups; the money came in through online giving platforms that let users choose among I.R.S.-approved charities.

Mr. Hosang, prosecutors said, spent the money on mortgage payments, credit card bills and at liquor stores.

“I did very wrong. I know that,” Mr. Hosang said in an emotional interview with The New York Times at his home on Staten Island. His voice breaking, Mr. Hosang said he had changed his life after a near-death spike in blood sugar in 2020, which he took as a sign from God. He said he wanted to make restitution for what he had done.

But, Mr. Hosang pointed out, every one of his charities had been approved.

“If you file something with an agency,” he said, “and they approve it, do you think it’s illegal?”

Mr. Hosang was born in Trinidad, grew up in Brooklyn, and graduated from New York University in 1984 with a degree in finance. He wound up [on the ugly side of Wall Street](#) — accused of running “pump and dump” operations that conned customers into paying high prices for low-quality stocks.

[Prosecutors later said](#) Mr. Hosang and his associates recruited salesmen on the subway, rewarded them with marijuana and [worked with an associate](#) of the Gambino crime family. Once, when a rival visited to complain, investigators said, Mr. Hosang and the mob associate “dangled him out the window of the ninth-floor office.”

In 1997, he was [barred from the industry](#) by a self-regulatory body then called the National Association of Securities Dealers.

In 1999, he [pleaded guilty](#) to federal charges of fraud and money laundering. Mr. Hosang’s attorney, Yusuf El Ashmawy, said Mr. Hosang cooperated with authorities and helped convict 150 people. He spent about two years in federal prison, according to federal records.

After his release, Mr. Hosang focused on a new business. In 2014, federal records show, he asked the I.R.S. to approve tax exemption for a new nonprofit: [“The American Cancer Society for Children, Inc.”](#) It wasn’t connected to the American Cancer Society.

“I got sidetracked. My son passed away,” Mr. Hosang said in the interview at his home, explaining how he had turned to setting up charities. “It was not a stable mind at the time.”

He began running the operation at a time when the agency was already ill prepared to detect signs of fraud in new applicants.

The first problem, according to former I.R.S. officials: Tax law does not prohibit nonprofits from impersonating better-known nonprofits by using sound-alike names. The second: There are no systematic checks for a history of fraud.

“You could be Jesse James or John Dillinger,” said [Marcus S. Owens](#), who headed the agency’s tax-exempt section until 2000 and now represents charities at the law firm Loeb & Loeb. “There’s nothing that says you can’t apply for tax-exempt status from a jail cell, having been convicted of charity fraud.”

Still, former officials said, the I.R.S. bureaucracy once offered a powerful weapon against potential fraudsters.

Examiners who suspected fraud could slow down applications by asking for financial records, plans for the future or information about their officers. The requests were often a bluff of sorts, intended to deter applicants from proceeding, even though the agency had little power to block them if they pressed ahead.

“Congress hasn’t given the I.R.S. authorization to issue rules to make sure charities are not run by crooks,” Mr. Owens said.

The agency, in its written statement, said that employees reviewing new applications “have been trained to identify fraud.”

Mr. Hosang still got through. Between 2014 and 2018, the agency approved 17 of his applications for groups with “American Cancer Society” in their names, according to I.R.S. records.

That caught the attention of the real American Cancer Society. The group began contacting state attorneys general, who often have the power to shut down fraudulent nonprofits in their jurisdictions. That worked in [North Dakota](#), [Washington](#) and California, but the state-by-state approach was slow.

In 2018, the American Cancer Society decided it needed a national approach. It wrote to the I.R.S., laying out the pattern it had identified in Mr. Hosang’s groups.

“It feels a little like ‘Scooby Doo,’” said Meghan Biss, a former I.R.S. lawyer who represented the American Cancer Society. “It shouldn’t have been that hard to figure out who the bad guy was.”

“Using the exact same mailing address? ‘I am the American Cancer Society of, like, 19 different cities?’ she said, adding, “That didn’t raise flags to anyone?”

American Cancer Society officials said they never heard back from the I.R.S.

But then, in 2020, the agency approved four new groups connected to Mr. Hosang: The “American Cancer Society” of [Michigan](#). And of [Detroit](#). And of [Green Bay](#). And of [Cleveland](#). Same Staten Island mailbox. “Sometimes you can get away with things,” Ms. Biss said. “Not because you were so smart but because the people who were supposed to be watching out were not.”

As it turned out, Mr. Hosang had switched to using a [new I.R.S. process](#) for smaller charities. The new program was established in 2014, in response to budget cuts and a scandal in which the agency was [accused of targeting conservative groups](#) for undue scrutiny.

The new “EZ” application stripped [11 pages](#) of questions down to three, nine boxes to check and a small blank for groups to describe their mission. There was little room for I.R.S. officials to mire suspected scammers in bureaucracy. The denial rate for new charities — which had been as high as one in 53 applicants in the old system — fell to one in 2,400 in this one.

[One 2019 study](#) by the agency’s taxpayer advocate found that 46 percent of the applicants it approved were not actually qualified, usually because their charters did not conform to charity law. It also noted that the “mission statements” were often so vague as to be useless. In 2021, [federal records show](#), the I.R.S. approved groups whose mission statements were, in their entirety, “CHARITABLE ACTIVITY,” “NON-PROFIT” and “Need to fill in” (possibly a forgotten note to self).

Mr. Hosang switched to the fast-track system in 2019, according to agency records. His mailbox on Staten Island was the same. The red flags were still red: Among the “directors” listed in these supposed charities, there was a long-dead classmate from N.Y.U., a long-estranged friend from Wall Street, and at least one person who appeared to be imaginary, living on a street in Brooklyn that does not exist.

But, despite the American Cancer Society’s warning, Mr. Hosang was even more successful than before: In two years of using the fast-track system, Mr. Hosang got the I.R.S. to approve 56 new charities.

[Zachary Weinstein](#), at the nonprofit-rating group Charity Navigator, said his group’s analysts had noticed the pattern in the I.R.S.’s data — and said it became almost comic, like a single miscreant fooling the same border guards with bad disguises.

“One guy coming in, in a bunch of dollar-store costume pieces,” Mr. Weinstein said. “He keeps crossing the border, and everyone keeps thinking he’s a different person.”

But Mr. Weinstein said Mr. Hosang’s success highlighted an unsettling problem. The entire regulatory system for U.S. charities rests on the I.R.S.’s vetting process. Its approval signals to [state governments](#) and potential donors that a charity is legitimate. It signals to internet giving platforms that a charity is worth including.

“It would be very expensive to do background checks on all the charities the I.R.S. has already approved,” since there are 1.4 million of them, said Ted Hart, chief executive of Charities Aid Foundation America, one of several online giving platforms that allowed donors to give to Mr. Hosang’s groups after they were approved. Mr. Hosang stole more than \$3,000 through their platform, according to the indictment in May. “We need to be able to trust this list” of charities approved by the I.R.S., Mr. Hart said, or donors will be misled again.

When the fast-track process was created, the agency said [it would free up personnel](#) to examine existing nonprofits. Instead, as the service’s [manpower has shrunk](#), those examinations have declined by 45 percent since 2013, according to I.R.S. figures.

State charity regulators have [asked the Federal Trade Commission](#) to ban charities from impersonating better-known groups. In Congress, Representatives Betty McCollum, Democrat of Minnesota, and Fred Upton, Republican of Michigan, have introduced [a bill](#) that scraps the “EZ” form and fast-track system entirely.

“This form is doing damage,” said [Ben Kershaw](#) of Independent Sector, a nonprofit association that supports the bill. “It needs to be stopped now.”

In New York, Mr. Hosang’s lawyer said he is in plea negotiations with prosecutors and “intends to make full restitution.”

“He’s in no shape to go to jail,” Mr. El Ashmawy said. “He’s hurt by this.”

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HEADLINE	07/03 Texas police: gunman shoots 6 killing 2
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/07/03/gunman-kills-two-civilians-injures-three-officers-texas-shootout/5981656857220/
GIST	<p>July 3 (UPI) -- A Texas gunman killed two people and injured a third Saturday before a shootout with law enforcement that left three police officers injured, police officials said.</p> <p>The Haltom City Police Department, which is part of the Dallas-Fort Worth region, received a 911 call around 6:45 p.m. reporting shots fired near the 5700 block of Diamond Oaks Drive North, Sgt. Rick Alexander said during a press conference. The 911 caller, described as an elderly woman, suffered a gunshot wound to the leg and is expected to survive.</p> <p>Alexander said that the suspect, who has not been identified, then shot at responding officers who "did return fire during the incident" though with an "unknown result."</p> <p>One officer suffered injuries to his right arm, finger and leg while another was shot in both legs and a third officer was hit in his upper thigh. The three officers are being treated at area hospitals for their injuries, which were all described as "non-life-threatening."</p> <p>After a "fairly lengthy" search for the suspect, he was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the 3900 block of Golden Oaks Drive - about a block away.</p> <p>Police recovered a "military-style rifle" and a handgun found near the arms of the suspect, Alexander said.</p>

	<p>Investigators found a woman dead inside the home on Diamond Oaks as well as the body of a man near a motorcycle in the home's driveway.</p> <p>The relationship between the suspected shooter and the three civilian victims was not immediately clear and the circumstances that led to the shooting were not immediately known.</p> <p>"It's going to be a while before we get a lot of information," Alexander said. "Texas Rangers are here and will take over the investigation."</p>
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